



GADEN SAMTEN LING TIBETAN BUDDHIST MEDITATION SOCIETY

POLICY

TITLE:
Membership Eligibility, Privileges, and Responsibilities

POLICY #:
12.1

WRITTEN BY:
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INITIALLY APPROVED:
May 9, 2016

REVISED BY:
Peggy Lipinski

FIRST REVISION APPROVED:
June 10, 2017

REVISED BY:
Peggy Lipinski

SECOND REVISION APPROVED:
November 18, 2019

CATEGORY:
Membership

Please note that the Policy is being reviewed in 2021, and changes may be pending.

NOTE: The first appearance of a term in bold in the body of this Policy (or its Appendixes) means that the term is defined in the Definitions part of this Policy.

PURPOSE:

This **Policy** outlines eligibility for membership in the **Society**, as well as the privileges and responsibilities of being a **Society Member**. This Policy supports the implementation of the **Vision, Mission, Organizational Values, and Objects** of the Society.

POLICY STATEMENT:

- The Society follows the **Gaden Tripa Tradition of the Gelugpa Lineage of Tibetan Buddhism** and welcomes any individual who has an interest in connecting with the teachings and philosophies of Tibetan Buddhism. Any individual who has an appreciation for the activities of the Society is welcome to apply to become a Society Member.
- The intention of this Policy is to facilitate a sense of belonging to a welcoming and comfortable place that supports spiritual growth. Through being a Society Member, individuals can develop a relationship with a uniquely qualified Spiritual Master who offers meaningful teachings and practices that benefit personal development. Due to the **Spiritual Director**'s kindness, depth of knowledge, and wisdom, the benefit of the teachings continuously increases as an individual's own understanding grows. As part of a spiritual community, Society Members benefit from being part of a group that is pursuing similar spiritual goals. Their growth is supported by the opportunity to contribute back to the Society for the benefit of others. Becoming a Society Member also creates more opportunities for timely communication around upcoming events, access to the Dharma library, and several other benefits as outlined below.

- A **Membership Matrix** (see Appendix A to this Policy) has been created to allow prospective members to determine which category of membership is the best fit for them. As a Society Member's interest and involvement grows over time, they will see that the Membership Matrix is dynamic and offers increasing privileges and responsibilities that suit their spiritual needs.

APPLICABILITY:

This Policy applies to any individual seeking membership in the Society.

POLICY ELEMENTS:

1. Non-discrimination

All individuals age 12 or older are welcome to apply for membership regardless of race, national or ethnic origin, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, cultural background, or disability.

2. Upholding the Lineage

The Gaden Tripa Tradition of the Gelugpa Lineage of Tibetan Buddhism is the foundation of the Society. Upholding this spiritual lineage is of vital importance, not only to the Society but also to Society Members' attainment of the fruits of their study and practice.

3. Voting Rights

Recognizing that voting rights have the potential to influence the future direction of the Society, these rights are reserved for **Jewel Members** and **Vajra Members** (who are **Voting Members**) as they have made a personal choice to become more involved and invested in the affairs of the Society.

4. Membership Categories

4.1 Categories were developed to support Society Members in becoming conscientious of several key points when choosing a membership category. More specifically, membership decisions can now explicitly reflect the individual's interest in the Society's Vision, Mission, Organizational Values, and Objects. When selecting their category of preferred membership, individuals may choose a membership that reflects their level of devotion to the lineage and preferred level of participation in the Society's programs.

4.2 There are 4 categories of membership in the Society. The Honorary Life Member category is reserved for the Spiritual Director(s). The 3 remaining membership classes are: 1) **Lotus Member**, 2) **Jewel Member**, and 3) **Vajra Member**. Any individual is welcome to apply for either the Lotus Member or Jewel Member category in accordance with their interest and involvement. Membership in the Vajra Member

category is for existing Society Members who are invited to that category by the Spiritual Director.

- 4.3 The criteria, privileges, and responsibilities for all membership categories are outlined in the Membership Matrix in Appendix A to this Policy. The **Membership Structure** is outlined in the diagram in Appendix B to this Policy.

5. Program Participation

- 5.1 The anticipated program participation rates noted as responsibilities in the Membership Matrix are presented to help Society Members better understand what level of involvement is most supportive of their spiritual growth. Programs include multi-week courses, weekly teachings and practices, and retreats. The rates are an average in recognition that life events sometimes make it difficult to attend regularly for a short period of time. Participation tracking is self-managed by each Society Member. Society Members are asked to be mindful of their intended attendance when considering which membership category is the best fit for them.
- 5.2 For prospective members who live outside Edmonton and are therefore not able to participate in multi-week courses or weekly teachings and practices, the participation rate for those is waived. But it is the Society's hope that Society Members living outside Edmonton will still take advantage of the opportunity to attend retreats and other events offered on weekends or during holiday periods.

6. Discounts

- 6.1 Discounts are offered for selected events to allow the Society to recognize Society Members for their support. Society Members who are investing more time in the Society are offered a higher level of discount in recognition of the volunteer hours they are dedicating to the Society.
- 6.2 The **Society Office** (not the Society Member) will calculate the amount of the discount and advise the Society Member of the amount payable for the event. If payment is made in cash, the Society Office will round the discount up to the nearest \$1.

7. Membership Fees

Membership fees are an investment in the Society. However, membership fees should not preclude individuals from applying. Any individual who feels they cannot afford the fee as stated is encouraged to contact the **President** or **Vice-President** to discuss an alternate fee. A family rate discount will be considered if a second member from the same household contributes an equal or greater level of volunteer service.

8. Suggested Monthly Donations

As a registered non-profit society, the Society relies on Society Members' generosity to operate the Society's facilities, programs, and events. Offering a regular monthly donation is the best way to help the Society continue to exist for the benefit of others. Monthly donations, which are optional, are particularly helpful as they stabilize the revenue flowing into the Society and make managing the facilities, programs, and events much more predictable.

9. Application Process

Any individual interested in becoming a Society Member or renewing their membership is required to do the following:

- a) Review the Membership Matrix to determine which membership category is the best fit;
- b) Print the current membership form from the Society's website;
- c) Fully complete the form; and
- d) Submit the form along with payment to the Society Office.

10. Membership Term, New Member Admission, and Membership Renewal

- 10.1 Memberships expire annually on December 31 of each calendar year, with the exception of the **Honorary Life Member** which has no expiry date. Memberships cannot be transferred to another individual (non-transferable).
- 10.2 Individuals wishing to apply for a new membership are welcome to apply at any time of year. Membership fees are pro-rated according to the month the new Society Member's application is submitted. The membership is effective the date the payment is processed.
- 10.3 Existing Society Members who wish to renew their membership need to submit a completed application and payment to the Society Office before December 31. Membership renewal takes effect January 1 of the following calendar year.
- 10.4 Society Members who wish to change their membership category outside of the annual application or renewal process are asked to contact the President or Vice-President to discuss their request. The Society Member will be notified whether their request is accepted within 30 days and, if approved, will be asked to make a pro-rated payment for any increased fee difference. There will be no reimbursement of fees when a Society Member chooses to change their membership to a different membership category with a lower fee.

11. Withdrawal

A Society Member may request in writing that their membership be withdrawn. There will be no reimbursement of fees when a Society Member chooses to withdraw their membership.

12. Member Conduct

All Society Members are expected to demonstrate behaviour that is in accordance with the Tibetan Buddhist teachings on ethics. For details see *Policy 12.2 Society Members' Code of Conduct and Discipline*.

13. Suspension and Expulsion

13.1 Society Members who fail to abide by *Policy 12.2 Society Members' Code of Conduct* may be subject to suspension or expulsion at the discretion of the Spiritual Director (see *Policy 3.2 Responsibilities of the Spiritual Director*). For details see *Policy 12.2 Society Members' Code of Conduct and Discipline*.

13.2 Once the Spiritual Director has made a decision to suspend or expel a Society Member, the Spiritual Director will notify the President verbally of the decision. The President will instruct the **Secretary** in writing to remove the individual from the **Register of Society Members**. The Secretary will notify the individual in writing of their suspension or expulsion, noting the date that the decision takes effect.

DEFINITIONS:

“Board” (as defined in the Bylaws), means the Board of Directors of the Society.

“Committee” means a committee established by the Board as provided in Bylaw 3.8 (which includes a standing committee such as an Operations Committee and a temporary committee such as an Event Based Planning Committee).

“Dharma” means the teachings of the Buddha.

“Event Based Planning Committee” means a temporary committee established by the Board to plan a particular event.

“Gaden Tripa Tradition of the Gelugpa Lineage of Tibetan Buddhism” means the lineage which follows the teachings of the philosopher Je Tsongkhapa. (The Gaden Tripa is the throne holder of Je Tsongkhapa on behalf of the Gelugpa lineage.)

“General Meeting” includes an Annual General Meeting and a Special General Meeting;

“Honorary Life Member” means an individual belonging to the Honorary Life Member category of membership as provided in *Policy 1.2 Membership Eligibility, Privileges, and Responsibilities*.

“Jewel Member” means a Society Member belonging to the Jewel category of membership as set out in *Policy 12.1 Membership Eligibility, Privileges, and Responsibilities*.

“Lotus Member” means a Society Member belonging to the Lotus category of membership as set out in *Policy 12.1 Membership Eligibility, Privileges, and Responsibilities*.

“Membership Matrix” means the matrix setting out the Society’s categories of membership, as set out in Appendix A to *Policy 12.1 Membership Eligibility, Privileges, and Responsibilities*.

“Membership Structure” means the diagram setting out the Society’s membership structure, as set out in Appendix B to *Policy 12.1 Membership Eligibility, Privileges, and Responsibilities*.

“Mission” means the mission of the Society as set out in *Policy 1.1 Vision and Mission*.

“Objects” (as currently registered by the Province of Alberta’s Registrar of Corporations) means the objects of the Society as follows:

- a) To advance, disseminate, practice and celebrate the teachings, philosophy and study of Tibetan Buddhism and meditation, in particular that of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Ganden Tripa tradition of the Gelugpa lineage;
- b) To provide religious and educational programs, retreats, meditations, knowledge and teachings in Tibetan Buddhist philosophy as noted in a) and Tibetan language, culture and religion;
- c) To establish a meditation centre and such other facilities and to do such other necessary acts and things as may be consistent with the achievement and advancement of the aforementioned objects.

“Operations Committee” means a standing committee that supports continuous operation of the facilities and programs of the Society.

“Organizational Values” means the Society’s values set out in *Policy 1.2 Organizational Values*.

“Policy” means a specific policy approved by the Board as provided in Bylaw 3.2 and *Policy 2.1 Policy Development*.

“President” means the individual occupying the office of President on the Board.

“Register of Society Members” means the register of Society Members required to be kept by the Society further to section 36 of the *Societies Act* (Alberta).

“Secretary” means the individual occupying the office of Secretary on the Board.

“Society” (as defined in the Bylaws) means Gaden Samten Ling Tibetan Buddhist Meditation Society.

“Society Member” means an individual whose name appears in the Register of Society Members (includes Lotus, Jewel, and Vajra members).

“Society Office” means the Society’s office located in the Alberta Centre for Peace and Meditation, 11403-101 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, T5G 2A9.

“Spiritual Director” means the current Spiritual Director of the Society unless otherwise noted.

“Vajra Member” means a Society Member belonging to the Vajra category of membership as set out in *Policy 12.1 Membership Eligibility, Privileges, and Responsibilities*.

“Vice-President” means the individual occupying the office of Vice-President on the Board.

“Vision” means the vision of the Society as set out in *Policy 1.1 Vision and Mission*.

“Voting Member” (as defined in the Bylaws) means a Society Member entitled to vote at General Meetings as provided *Policy 12.1 Membership Eligibility, Privileges, and Responsibilities* (includes Jewel and Vajra Members,).

REFERENCES:

Appendix A: Membership Matrix of Criteria, Privileges, and Responsibilities

Appendix B: Membership Structure Diagram

Policy 3.2 Responsibilities of the Spiritual Director

Policy 12.2 Society Members’ Code of Conduct and Discipline

EFFECTIVE DATE OF INITIAL POLICY: October 12, 2016

EFFECTIVE DATE OF FIRST REVISED POLICY: June 10, 2017

EFFECTIVE DATE OF SECOND REVISED POLICY: November 18, 2019

NEXT REVIEW: October 2020

**Appendix A:
Membership Matrix of
Criteria, Privileges, and Responsibilities**

Lotus Member (open to all)

Criteria	
Motivation	Sees the benefit of meditation at a personal level, enjoys coming to the Dharma centre and meeting like-minded people
Devotion	Appreciates meditation and is exploring devotion to Buddhism
Conduct	Developing an understanding of the results of positive and negative actions; trying to reduce negative actions and increase positive actions
Privileges	
Voting Rights at General Meetings	No
Society Committees	Not eligible to be on Committees
Society Board	Not eligible to be on the Board
Library Access	May borrow library items for a 3-week period
A/V (Audio Visual) Archive Access	No, however the Society may consider limited access with donation, such as when an individual wishes to attend an introductory multi-week course remotely
Discounts	5% discount on multi-day retreats on-site or off-site
Responsibilities	
Program Participation	Attends 1 or 2 multi-week courses a year OR Attends 1 or 2 other teachings or practices a month on average
Retreat Participation	Attends 1 or 2 retreats a year on average
Fundraising Participation	Supports or volunteers at 1 major fundraising event
Volunteer Participation	Actively looks for opportunities to share skills for the benefit of the Society and offers help when possible
Financial Support	
Membership Fee	\$60 per year per individual (which equates to \$5.00 per month)
Suggested donation level	\$10 to \$25 per month

Jewel Member (open to all)

Criteria	
Motivation	Sees the benefit of the Buddhist teachings at a personal level and wishes to help others discover this benefit
Devotion	Devoted to Tibetan Buddhism and His Holiness the Dalai Lama
Conduct	Able to act at most times with a positive motivation and strives to display kindness to others at all times
Privileges	
Voting Rights at General Meetings	Yes
Society Committees	Eligible to serve on a Committee if invited by the President
Society Board	Not eligible to be on the Board
Library Access	May borrow library items for a 3-week period
A/V (Audio Visual) Archive Access	Yes, may access online
Discounts	10% discount on 1-day retreats on-site 5% discount on 1-day retreats off-site 5% discount on multi-day retreats on-site or off-site
Responsibilities	
Program Participation	Attends most multi-week courses a year OR Attends 2 to 4 other teachings or practices a month on average
Retreat Participation	Attends 30% of retreats
Fundraising Participation	Supports all major fundraising events
Volunteer Participation	Volunteers 5 or more hours a month through Committee participation and general volunteer duties
Special Projects	Accepts special projects when requested by the Spiritual Director and President to share skills for the benefit of the Society
Financial Support	
Membership Fee	\$90 per year per individual (which equates to \$7.50 per month)
Suggested donation level	\$25 to \$40 per month

Vajra Member (by invitation of the Spiritual Director)

Criteria	
Motivation	Sees the benefit of the Dharma at a societal level and wishes to help nourish and sustain the Dharma centre which is providing a base for the Dharma to flourish
Devotion	Fully devoted to upholding the Gaden Tripa Tradition of the Gelugpa Lineage of Tibetan Buddhism
Conduct	Deeply aware of the impact of their actions and actively strives to serve with a Bodhicitta motivation for the benefit of others
Privileges	
Voting Rights at General Meetings	Yes
Society Committees	Eligible to join Committees if invited by the President
Society Board	Eligible to join the Board if invited by the Spiritual Director
Library Access	May borrow library items for a 3-week period
A/V (Audio Visual) Archive Access	Yes, may access online
Discounts	20% discount on 1-day retreats on-site 10% discount on 1-day retreats off-site 10% discount on multi-day retreats on-site or off-site
Responsibilities	
Weekly Teachings and Practice Participation	Attends 1 or 2 times a week on average
Retreat Participation	Attends 50% of retreats
Fundraising Participation	Supports all major fundraising events and actively asks others for support
Volunteer Participation	Volunteers 20 or more hours a month through teacher support, Committee participation, and general volunteer duties
Special Projects	Accepts at least 1 special project each year to be determined in collaboration with the Spiritual Director and President in order to share skills for the benefit of the Society
Financial Support	
Membership Fee	\$120 per year per individual (which equates to \$10.00 per month)
Suggested donation level	\$40 to \$80 per month

Honorary Life Member

Criteria
Current Spiritual Director appointed by the Board Assistant Spiritual Director appointed by the Board Former Spiritual Director(s)
Privileges
Eligible to vote at all General Meetings of the Society
Responsibilities
Responsibilities of the Current and Assistant Spiritual Directors as set out in <i>Policy 3.2 Responsibilities of the Spiritual Director</i>
A former Spiritual Director holds no responsibilities
Financial Support
No fee applies to the Honorary Life Member(s)

Appendix B: Membership Structure Diagram

