

Ethical Guidelines for Cambridge Buddhist Centre

These guidelines are for those at the Cambridge Buddhist Centre (CBC) who are running and supporting activities for the Buddhist Community and the general public, such as classes in meditation or Buddhism, study groups, yoga or mindfulness based stress reduction.

These guidelines also establish the principles of behaviour we expect from anyone using the Centre.

The primary ethical guideline for all participating in activities at the Buddhist centre is that of love and respect for all life. This involves treating others with awareness, kindness, friendliness and respect. All committed members of CBC community aspire to act in this way and all members of the public participating in the activities of the centre are invited to do so in accordance with this basic expectation of respect for all life. (This includes, for example, eating vegetarian food at the centre.) Order members and Mitras leading activities in particular aim to exemplify this principle and to act as guardians of it for others participating in activities. This includes noticing any behaviours inappropriate to this guideline and communicating this appropriately to the individuals involved.

The guidelines follow the framework of the Buddha's five ethical precepts - widely known throughout the Buddhist world - offering a general principle for each and one or two specific applications. All those who publicly state their wish to practise Buddhism within the Triratna Buddhist Community (which runs the CBC) explicitly undertake these precepts.

The precepts can be applied to all areas of human behaviour. These guidelines are mainly intended to offer guidance in one key area: where Order members, or other experienced members of the CBC community, are presenting and communicating Buddhist principles to those who are new or less experienced, especially in public situations, where a particular duty of care is owed. That duty of care means that we ask class leaders and their teams to behave appropriately and to ensure that all those attending also behave in accordance with the ethos and principles set out here.

Breaches of the precepts within our Buddhist Community will normally be dealt with in the course of our daily spiritual lives, through communication, confession, apology, rectification, discussion, making amends and putting in place structures and supports which prevent recurrence. Where a formal complaint of a gross ethical breach is made, it will be investigated by senior Order members, and appropriate sanctions invoked. It may also be necessary to take temporary action, until the outcome of the investigation is known. There may be occasions when we are required by law to notify the police.

The Centre has a Safeguarding Officer whose role it is to ensure that our safeguarding policies are adhered to.

1.

I undertake to abstain from harming living beings.

The principle of non-violence and kindness.

In principle all our activities aim to support the awakening of the individual. In all our dealings with one another we aspire to behave in a spirit of kindness, expressing *kalyana mitrata*, which we translate as 'spiritual friendship'.

Our spiritual community has been defined as a 'free association of individuals'. While respecting this principle, it is important that individuals in positions of trust and authority do not misuse their trusted position or authority for their own benefit or to influence others inappropriately.

Wishing to minimise the harm we do to living beings, we affirm that physical violence and strong expressions of anger have no place among us. Should these occur we will investigate and take action. And we ask class leaders also to act as guardians of the first precept should class participants act in an inappropriate way in a class context - clarifying what's appropriate and inappropriate at the Buddhist centre.

We ask class leaders and their teams to do what they can to help the Centre to reduce and minimise our impact on the environment, locally and internationally.

2.

I undertake to abstain from taking the not given.

The principle of generosity.

We wish to offer the Buddha's teachings in a spirit of generosity, making them accessible to all.

We aspire to express generosity by caring for our community and those who work and practise within it, finding ways to support those who undertake particular responsibilities in teaching and administration or serving as trustees.

Those who handle money or property for the Cambridge Buddhist Centre will take care of them and avoid their deliberate misuse or misappropriation. If misuse is suspected, we will investigate and take action promptly.

We do not have charges for many events and therefore we ask those attending events at the Centre to join in with the spirit of generosity and contribute what they can to the Centre's upkeep.

3

I undertake to abstain from sexual misconduct.

The principle of contentment.

The Cambridge Buddhist Centre is a community of people practising the Buddha's teachings together. As such it is natural that close relationships should develop between us, and that some of these may be sexual relationships.

We encourage all members of our community to conduct their sexual relationships ethically, with awareness and kindness.

If someone teaching at the Centre is grossly unethical in this area they will be suspended from all teaching duties and only re-instated when the Centre Chair and Council Executive are happy that they can be trusted to behave ethically in future.

People in teaching roles or similar have a particular responsibility in this area, particularly to those new to the Buddhist Centre. We propose that they do not start a relationship while they are the other person's main connection with Buddhism and the Cambridge Triratna Buddhist Community, even when there is clear mutual attraction and wish to enter into a relationship. Rather, we would ask them to wait until the less experienced person has established other effective friendships within our community.

We require that any proposed relationship between someone in a teaching role and a less experienced person is discussed openly in the context of the Order. Usually this will mean their chapter and/or their preceptor and kalyana mitras. We also expect the Centre Chair and other Order Members involved in running the Centre to be kept informed.

4

I undertake to abstain from false speech.

The principle of truthfulness.

At ordination, members of the Triratna Buddhist Order undertake ten training precepts, of which four concern ethical communication. In all our dealings with those we teach we are committed to truthful, kindly, helpful and harmonious communication, written or spoken.

We will ask and expect those using the Centre to respect the ethos of communication in the Centre and swearing, shouting or angry and aggressive outbursts will not be acceptable.

We wish to create an atmosphere of friendliness, co-operation and trust. Those in positions of responsibility at the Cambridge Buddhist Centre will share sensitive information only on the basis of care and concern for the person to whom it relates and for others coming to the Centre, including those who run or lead activities. More generally we expect a similar sensitivity in our community to the sharing of information about others.

We encourage ethical reflection and disclosure in our community, but are careful to emphasise that this happens in its own time and at its own pace. We note that confession may offer no protection from the law. Illegal activity disclosed in the context of confession may have to be reported to the relevant authorities.

5

I undertake to abstain from intoxication.

The principle of mindfulness.

The Triratna Buddhist Community aims to provide support for the development of wisdom and compassion through deepening awareness.

We aspire to engage with our practice and with each other with as much mindfulness as possible and we encourage all who attend the Centre to act with awareness of others.

We aim to provide supportive environments for those wishing to live without intoxicants. Teachers and those in positions of senior responsibility at the Cambridge Buddhist Centre are expected in all contexts in which they find themselves to refrain from becoming intoxicated through the taking of alcohol or other substances. We will not serve alcohol or other intoxicants at Cambridge Buddhist Centre.

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