

Amida School & Order

Provisions for Structure, Continuity and Governance

Preamble

This document, hereinafter referred to as Provisions, incorporates all matters enacted and in force as at 31 January 2007 that guide and define the life of that religious society named Amida-shu incorporating the Amida Order. This edition may be referred to as “Provisions 20070131”.

Chapter One: The Amida School: Doctrine and Mission

1. Doctrine: The Amida School is a form of Pureland Buddhism, affirming the trikaya nature of Buddha, the bonbu nature of the adherent, and the primacy of nembutsu among Buddhist practices.
2. In the Amida School there is to be no discrimination on the basis of sex, race, age, sexual orientation or worldly status.
3. The Amida School recognises the value of all Buddhist canonical texts and commentaries, regards none as infallible, and gives special attention to the Three Pure Land Sutras, together with the Lotus and Pratyutpanna Samadhi Sutras.
4. The Amida School respects the Buddhist ethical tradition, applies it to society as well as to the individual, and works toward a world where kindness, harmony and awareness prevail; wrong speech is not heard; killing, warfare and the use of weapons ceases; animals are not eaten, raised for slaughter or harshly exploited; sexual exploitation does not occur; and there is no resort to alcohol, tobacco and non-medical mind altering drugs or poisons. We encourage members of Amida-shu to follow lifestyles compatible with these ideals and aims. We hold to the vision of the Pure Land here and hereafter.
5. The Amida School reveres Amida Buddha as the Buddha of the ancient past who remains the Buddha present for us in spirit; Shakyamuni Buddha as the Buddha of this historical era; and Maitreya Buddha as the Buddha of the future age; together with Quan Shi Yin, Tai Shi Chi and all the other great bodhisattva saviours and exemplars.
6. The Amida School honours all Buddhist sages and ancestors of all schools and particularly reveres the sages Shan Tao and Honen, their teachers and disciples.
7. Mission: The mission of the Amida School shall be to foster Pureland Buddhist faith and its application for the spiritual, social, psychological and practical benefit of all sentient beings, individually and collectively, past, present and future, here and hereafter.

8. The School and the Order: Within the Amida School there is established the Order of Amida Buddha. All members of the Order are members of the School. Where membership of the School is a declaration of and commitment to faith and practice, membership of the Order is a commitment, lifelong in intent, to mutual support of other Order members through the vicissitudes of life that the Order may collectively serve the School and its mission.

Chapter Two: Membership

1. The Amida School: Persons who take the Five Refuges and affirm their adherence to and willingness to accept the standards and ordinances of the Amida School (Amida-shu), as set out in these Provisions and in codes and guidances established under these Provisions now and in the future, shall be considered members of that school, may be referred to as Amida Buddhists, and shall be known as “those having a karmic affinity with Amitabha Buddha,” provided that they continue to reaffirm their commitment in the customary manner as established in paragraph 2 of this chapter.
2. Criteria: Membership of the School is open to all those who follow this Amidist faith, actually practise it, and have done so for more than one year. That is to say, new members of the Amida School shall generally be persons who have been Buddhist, evidenced by having taken the threefold refuge, for at least one year and have been regular attendees at Amida School meetings or involved in the life of the Amida School in an active way for not less than one year.
3. Admission Procedure: Admission to Amida-shu or to the Amida Order may occur at any time of year in an appropriate ceremony conducted by an ordained member of the Amida Order, generally a senior minister or amitarya. Admission ceremonies will always be included in the Bodhi Retreat held by the Order in the first week of December whenever there are candidates.
4. Admission Procedure: Admission to membership of Amida-shu and to the Amida Order is by invitation of the Head of the Order on behalf of the Order and School. The Head of the Order shall from time to time and every summer request Order members to propose candidates for membership. The Head of the Order shall put to Conclave his or her proposals for admissions. Non-ordained members of the Order shall also be consulted. The Head of the Order shall seek consensus and listen carefully to advice before making a final decision. (a) For School admissions: When a list has been agreed, banns shall be published to the membership of the school to give opportunity for comment or objection and shortly after, the registrar will issue letters of invitation. (b) For Order membership the Head of the Order shall communicate with the invitee directly.
5. Confirmation: Members of the School shall reaffirm their faith and membership in a formal ceremony periodically. The periods for reaffirmation shall be (a) after one year, taken as meaning more than six months and less

than 25 months after first entry; (b) then at least once every three years; (c) when a person has been in membership for more than ten years, once in five years; (d) persons over 70 years of age who have been in membership more than 10 years do not need to reaffirm. Nothing here shall prevent or be taken as discouraging reaffirmation annually by all who wish. Order members are not obliged to reaffirm School membership (see paragraph 11 of this chapter). Persons who have reaffirmed their membership under subsection (a) of this paragraph shall be termed Confirmed Members.

6. Termination of Membership: Termination may occur in any of the following ways: (a) Membership lapses if not reaffirmed in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 3 above; (b) A person may resign from membership by writing to the Registrar to this effect; (c) A person may only be removed from membership against their will through the application of the procedure for plaint or complaint. This procedure is currently being evolved and is in a consultation stage. Special provisions apply to Order members, see below.
7. Congregations: Members of the Amida School who live in geographical proximity and hold a weekly meeting for a year or longer together with one or more Order members may be recognised as a congregation of the Amida School. The appropriate convocation to make a decision to recognise a congregation shall be that to which the most senior Order member involved belongs. Decisions to recognise a congregation shall be made known to the Secretary and to the Registrar of the Order and recorded in the Minutes of the Order.
8. Affiliation: A congregation and its members individually shall be considered to be affiliated to a convocation of the Order. A congregation is affiliated to the convocation through which it receives recognition. It remains affiliated to that same convocation unless, for a period of one year or longer, there is no longer any Order member of that convocation who is a member of that congregation. In this circumstance the congregation may, with the consent of the Head of the Order and of the convocation to which application is now made, choose to reaffiliate. A congregation may not affiliate to a convocation in which it has no order member. School members who are not part of a recognised congregation shall be considered to be affiliated to the first convocation unless the Head of the Order makes specific provision otherwise. All acts of affiliation and reaffiliation shall be made known to the Registrar and the Secretary and recorded in the minutes of the Order. School members shall not be members of more than one congregation nor affiliated to more than one convocation.
9. Proceedings of Congregations: A congregation may establish formal meetings. If it does so, copies of the minutes thereof shall be sent to the Secretary of the Order.
10. Order Members: Persons who, being members of the Amida School, take the Five Refuges in the form prescribed for the purpose of admission to the Order shall be called order members and those who have taken this refuge shall

collectively be referred to as the Order of Amida Buddha, or, less formally, the Amida Order.

11. Persons eligible to enter the Order shall be persons for whom Amida Buddhism is their professed faith, the Amida School is their primary religious affiliation, this faith and affiliation has been demonstrated over a sufficient period of time to give evidence of its durability, and there is a place in a Convocation of the Order for them. Persons admitted to the Order shall be persons committed to a non-alcohol, non-meat diet. As a general rule they will be people who have been established in this mode of life for two or more years.
12. When a person desires to enter the Order, there will be consultations among those who know the person. The final decision shall be made by the Head of the Order. Should the Order grow to a size where this becomes impractical, further provisions for delegation of responsibility shall be made.
13. Order membership is a solemn commitment intended to be life long. Termination of membership of the Order is therefore a grave matter and should only occur after a formal hearing of a plaint or complaint demonstrates that there has been such a complete breakdown in the person's commitment and performance that it is beneficial to all concerned that they be no longer in membership. Such action should not be undertaken in haste and such remedy should not be resorted to unless other avenues have been exhausted.

Chapter Three: First Generation

1. Origin: The Amida Order came into existence in 1998 when Caroline Brazier, Louise Duguid and Linda Dhammika took bodhisattva vows and became Reverend Prasada, Reverend Modgala and Reverend Amrita, respectively, joining Reverend Master Dharmavidya in creating the new Amida ordained sangha. In 2002 the existence of the Order was ratified by the Trustees of the Amida Trust and the position of Lay Order Member was introduced. By December 2004 the Order had a membership of 12. In April 2005 a new structure was introduced. The Order would henceforth be organised in convocations and persons of confirmed Amida faith who were not Order members were invited to become School Members. Thus Amida-shu came into being. In December 2006 the second convocation of the Order was created. This chapter regulates the formation of convocations.
2. The first twelve members of the Order, ordained and lay together, were designated "The First Convocation" of the Order. For the purposes of this document this will also be referred to as the "first generation".
3. The Head of the Order shall be a member of the First Convocation.
4. The maximum size for a convocation shall be 12 order members, except that, in the case of the First Convocation, former heads of the Order shall not be counted for this purpose.

5. The minimum size for a convocation shall be four order members.
6. A convocation may include members who are lay and ordained, whether amitaryas, novices, ministers or chaplains.
7. Members of a convocation shall support one another both practically and spiritually.
8. Members of a convocation shall meet periodically and be well known to one another.
9. Membership of a convocation should not be considered an impediment to co-operation with members of the Order from other convocations.
10. The convocation to which an order member belongs shall not affect their occupancy of ranks or roles in the Order as a whole. The convocation structure provides spiritual and practical support. A convocation may, however, become a focus for co-operation and in their meetings members of a convocation may develop collective action or proposals arising from a consideration of how they may best contribute to the Amida School.

Chapter Four: Further Generations

1. Second Generation: A second generation of up to 11 further convocations may be generated.
2. A second generation convocation in its final form shall have one, and only one, member who is also a member of the first generation and who is not the Head of the Order or a former Head of the Order. However, in its early life, a second generation convocation of five or more members may exceptionally and temporarily have two members who are members of the first generation if this is advantageous to getting the convocation established.
3. It follows that second generation convocations can only commence when the following conditions shall be met: (a) There are at least three aspirants who meet the conditions of paragraphs 9, 10 and 11 above; (b) They are known to one another, have affinity together and are committed to working together and supporting one another; and (c) There is a member of the First Convocation who sponsors their application and will become a member of the new convocation
4. A proposal to establish a new convocation must be approved by a formal meeting of its parent convocation and by the Head of the Order who will make suitable consultations.
5. Once a convocation has been established, it may accept new members up to a limit of 12.

6. Vacancy: When a convocation loses a member for whatever reason, it will be considered to have a vacancy.
7. Vacancies may be filled by transfer from another convocation if this is acceptable to the members of both convocations involved. Convocations may not recruit from other convocations except (a) to fill vacancies or (b) in the event of another convocation being dissolved. Vacancies that arise through the death of a member shall not be filled until at least three years have passed. Convocations shall keep record of and honour the anniversaries of the death of their members.
8. Completion: A convocation shall be considered to be complete when it has 12 members or when it has nine or more members and those members unanimously resolve that they do not intend to take any further members except to fill vacancies. A completion resolution shall be made known to the Order. Completion resolutions may only be revoked by unanimous resolution of the members of the convocation and any such revocation must similarly be made known to the Order.
9. A convocation that falls below four members and remains so for more than a year shall consult with other members of the Order to seek a solution. A solution could involve merger of two or more undersized convocations. In the last resort a convocation may be dissolved and its remaining members may then seek membership of other existing convocations.
10. Third Generation: A third generation of convocations may come into being either when: (a) Eleven second generation convocations exist and all are complete; or (b) For practical or other reasons, it is deemed to be conducive to the spread of the Dharma and spiritual support of order members for a particular second generation convocation to give rise to a third generation. This shall require a formal decision of the Head of the Order after due consultation. The right to establish a further generation of convocations shall only be granted to convocations that are themselves complete.
11. Where a convocation has descendent convocations, it may be referred to as their parent or root.
12. Subsequent Generations: Third generation convocations shall be formed in the same manner as second generation ones, except that they will not have a member who is also a member of the First Convocation, but, instead, will have a member who belongs also to a second generation convocation. In principle fourth and subsequent generations could be formed in analogous fashion, but this should only be considered if the Order is in good heart.
13. Link Member: The member of a convocation who also belongs to an earlier generation convocation shall be called the “link member”.
14. Should a convocation be left without a link person as a result of some eventuality, this situation should be rectified quickly, even if this changes the generation status of the convocation.

15. Link members shall not by virtue of that fact alone exercise the role of leader. The internal structure of each convocation is for the members of that convocation to decide or evolve for themselves.
16. Meetings: Each convocation shall organise its own pattern of meetings within the framework provided in Chapter Five.
17. A convocation may also convene meetings to which all its descendent convocations are invited. In the case of the First Convocation, such will be General Meetings of the Order. Such General Meetings of the Order shall be convened at least once in any fifteen month period.

Chapter Five: Meetings, Consultations and Decision Processes

1. General Meetings of the Order may be convened by the Head of the Order or by unanimous decision of the First Convocation. The Head of the Order shall normally call a General Meeting if petitioned by 20% of the Order membership. General meetings require four weeks notice to all members. The quorum for a General Meeting shall be 60% of the Order membership. As the Order grows it is anticipated that the quorum may be reduced. A pattern of holding an Order Meeting in early December and another in the spring is normative.
2. Regional Meetings: Provision for regional meetings shall be made in due course should need arise.
3. Ministers Meetings: There shall be meetings of Ministers, including chaplains. These shall occur at least once in any fifteen month period.
4. Convocation Meetings: Ordinary meetings of convocations shall occur at the discretion of the members thereof, but, in any case, not less than once in fifteen months. One third of the members of a convocation may require a meeting by giving at least four weeks notice to all members. Notice may be waived by the verbal or written consent of 60% of members. Meetings may be conducted using distant media as long as these provide for live interaction. The quorum for a convocation meeting shall be 60% of its members, but convocations may establish standing orders that allow for sub-groups for specified purposes.
5. Minutes of convocation meetings shall be communicated to the Secretary of the Order.
6. Conclave: There shall be at least one meeting per year termed Conclave to which all ordained members of the Order shall be invited. The annual conclave shall normally be held in late August or early September.
7. Channels: Formal channels shall exist for consultation and decision making. These involve petition, consultation, proposal, and act. These may loosely be

referred to as the yellow, green, white and red stages of the process, respectively. The sequence set out in paragraphs 7 to 10 is intended to be normative rather than obligatory. Where a stage is redundant or would cause undue delay it may be omitted. Also, sub-stages may be used, as where a consultation is circulated first to Order members before being made available to the whole School.

8. Petition: Any member or group of members of the School or any convocation may petition the Head of the Order on any matter of concern to the School. Such petition shall be submitted to the Secretary and the Head of the Order as a (yellow) paper or communication. In the case of petitions that have the support of more than fifty percent of School members or more than fifty percent of convocations, the Head of the Order shall respond within four weeks of receipt of the petition by making a Declaration (as defined below).
9. Consultations: A consultation (green) paper may be initiated by the Head of the Order or any Order Member, in response to a petition or otherwise. The issuing of a green paper may be associated with the setting up of a working party to investigate an issue. Green papers are intended to put important issues before the membership. In the first instance they shall be circulated to all members of the Order. They should provide relevant information, set out alternatives and invite contribution. Green papers shall be made available to Order and School members, not necessarily simultaneously, who are invited to comment and respond within a specified time frame.
10. Proposal: A proposal (white) paper may be initiated by the Head of the Order or any person to whom he or she has delegated this task. A white paper proposes a course of action, solution to a problem, or defining conclusion to an issue. White papers shall be made available to Order and School members who are invited to comment and respond within a specified time frame.
11. Act: An executive act (red) may be made by the Head of the Order who shall generally only do so after due consultation within the parameters created by these provisions and the time frame within which the matter at issue must be settled. Acts are binding upon the School and Order. Acts relating to weighty matters shall commonly be made by the Head of the Order in meetings of the Order or of the School and will be preceded by serious efforts to achieve consensus. In the last resort, the Head of the Order must decide. The procedure for the Act (red) stage of a consultation is that the Head of the Order shall place before the Order a numbered draft of a revised edition of Provisions that incorporates both the matter to be enacted and any resultant modifications to other parts of Provisions. Time will be allowed for discussion, reflection and objection in the light of which the Head of the Order shall decide whether to (a) incorporate further revisions, in which case a further draft revised edition shall be issued for reflection, or (b) reject suggested revisions, in which case he shall make a statement to this effect, or (c) enact the document without the suggested revisions, but put the suggestions into a new consultation process by inviting the proposer to submit a consultation (green) or proposal (white) paper as appropriate. When the Head of the Order deems that this procedure for the enactment stage has

reached a satisfactory limit he shall declare a new edition of the Provisions definitive. To this end, the issue of a draft edition of Provisions will normally include a limit date by which it will automatically be enacted if no further objections are raised.

12. Declaration: A declaration is a formal statement of intent by the Head of the Order concerning actions to be implemented within a specified time frame.

Chapter Six: Categories and Offices

1. Categories: There shall be three categories of members in the Amida Order, namely, lay members, ministers and amitaryas.
2. There shall be probationary grades in the case of ministers and amitaryas. Probationary ministers shall be termed chaplains. Probationary amitaryas shall be termed novices. Ministers, chaplains, amitaryas and novices shall be appointed by ordination.
3. Persons preparing to become novices shall be termed postulants and persons preparing to become chaplains shall be called aspirants. Postulants and aspirants may but need not be members of the School, but, upon Ordination, they will become members of the Order and shall be required to meet criteria for Order membership at that time.
4. All ordained members of the Order shall take precepts at ordination. Chaplains shall take a prescribed form of bodhisattva precepts. Novices shall take the precepts of chaplains plus a prescribed form of renunciant precepts. On progression from chaplain to minister or from novice to amitarya, the precepts already taken shall be confirmed.
5. Ceremonies to admit or renew entrance to the Amida School may be conducted by amitaryas, ministers or chaplains and shall normally be conducted by ministers. There should normally be at least four members of the Amida School present.
6. Ceremonies to admit or renew entrance to the Amida Order may be conducted by amitaryas or by ministers. There should normally be at least four members of the Amida Order present.
7. Ceremonies of ordination shall be conducted by the Head of the Order or an appointed deputy.
8. Where less than the minimum number of appropriate sangha are present the admission must be confirmed within twelve months at an Order meeting.
9. Offices: In addition to the Head of the Order, the Order shall have the following offices appointed by invitation by the Head of the Order:
Deputy Head of the Order
Registrar

Secretary
Peacemaker
Archivist

While, in principle, appointments can be made at any time at the discretion of the Head of the Order, they generally are made at the Spring Meeting of the Order after consultation with senior Order members and are reconfirmed annually at that meeting.

10. Only members of the Order may be invited to hold offices.
11. In the situation where it is questionable whether an officer continues to command the respect of the Order or the School, the matter may be dealt with under the provisions for petitions.
12. The Officers, including the Head of the Order, may appoint aides to assist them in their work. Aides may, but need not, be members of the School. The Officer is deemed responsible for the work of his or her aides and can appoint or dismiss them at his or her discretion.
13. Each convocation shall have a Link Member as specified in 4.13 above and shall also have a Clerk elected by its own membership. The duties of the Clerk shall include all formalities associated with the calling and recording of meetings and decisions. The functions of Clerk may be divided between more than one person at the discretion of the convocation, but one nominated person shall hold overall responsibility and this person identity shall be notified to the Registrar.

Chapter Seven: Records

1. Minutes: Minutes of proceedings shall be kept by the Secretary. These shall include a record of
 - a. Formal decisions made by the Order in meetings;
 - b. Petitions, consultations, proposals, acts, declarations, and any similar or equivalent formal steps taken by the Order or School as well as details of working parties or inquiries established and their outcome;
 - c. Meetings, decisions and proceedings of convocations;
 - d. Formal meetings, decisions and proceedings of congregations.
 - e. Births, marriages, deaths, naming ceremonies, weddings, funerals, admissions, ordinations, and expulsions.
 - f. Other proceedings.
2. Convocations shall send copies of their minutes to the Secretary and congregations shall do so if they hold formal meetings.
3. Registers: The Registrar shall keep the following records:
 - a. Register of Members indicating name, address and date of birth, date of admission to membership of the Amida School, congregation, date of admission to membership to the Amida Order, admission to and

transfers between convocations, and date of death or cessation from membership.

- b. Register of Convocations indicating the name of the convocation, date of formation, parent convocation, details of link member, clerk and members. The Registrar shall monitor that convocations meet and issue notice to the clerk in cases of default. Copies of such notice shall also be sent to the Secretary and recorded in the minutes of the Order.
 - c. Register of Congregations indicating the name of the congregation, date of formation, affiliation, names of Order members who belong to the congregation.
4. Archive: The Archivist shall keep copies of all documents deemed to be of value as a record of the history and development of the School and Order, including constitutional documents, newsletters, publicity materials, photographs, press cuttings and other similar materials. Copies of all enacted editions of Provisions shall be kept together with a record of the dates enacted and superceded.
 5. Register of Complaints & Complaints: The Peacemaker shall keep a Register of all formal complaints and complaints lodged and the outcome. The Peacemaker shall also keep an archive of all relevant documents for a period of six years after which they will be destroyed.

Chapter Eight: Succession

1. In the event of the Head of the Order dying, retiring or becoming incapacitated, the next most senior member shall act in his/her place until a new Head has been appointed. The new Head of the Order shall be selected in the following way:
 - a. If the previous Head of the Order has indicated in writing one or more persons whom he would nominate, then this information shall be made available to all members of the Order; then
 - b. All members of the Order shall be allowed to propose candidates. Nobody may propose him or herself; then
 - c. The list of proposed candidates shall be made known. Those unwilling to be nominated may stand aside; then, after an interval of between two and six weeks
 - d. An election shall be held according to the following rules:
 - i. Each member of the Order of more than three years standing at the date at which the post of Head of the Order became vacant shall have one transferable vote
 - ii. If a candidate receives more than fifty percent of the votes cast in any round of voting, they shall be declared elected.
 - iii. If a round is inconclusive, the candidate with least votes shall not stand in the subsequent round.
2. The person elected shall become a member of the First Convocation and cease to be a member of any other convocation.

3. Affirmation: Following the appointment of a new Head of the Order, arrangements shall be made so that all existing members of the Order, individually or in small groups, have opportunity to meet with the new Head of the Order so that they may affirm him or her as the spiritual teacher of the Order and confirm their commitment to the Order. These meetings shall be completed within one year of the new Head of the Order taking office.
4. Secession: Any person who wishes not to continue as a member of the Order may, during the Affirmation Year, leave without shame to any party. The Order will assist such persons, to the extent indicated by common friendship, to find a suitable anchorage in another Buddhist sangha or faith community suitable to their needs.
5. Confirmation: At the next General Meeting of the Order after the end of the Affirmation Year, the new Head of the Order will be confirmed in office, having been affirmed by all continuing Order members.
6. Reconfiguration: In the wake of the appointment of a new Head of the Order, a certain amount of reconfiguration is to be anticipated. These changes shall take place within the structure already established in this document, except that during the twelve months following Confirmation, the Head of the Order shall be empowered to entertain applications from convocations, whether complete or not and whether undersized or not, to (a) divide, (b) merge, (c) receive members from other convocations; provided in all cases that (i) the proposal is acceptable to all the members of the convocations directly affected; (ii) it does not finally result in the creation of convocations that are larger than 12, smaller than four, or have more or less than one link person each.
7. Settlement: At the General Meeting of the Order following the year of Reconfiguration, the Order will be declared to be settled. The exceptional provisions of the year of Reconfiguration will then cease.

Chapter Nine: Additional Matters

1. Meat, alcohol and weapons shall not be allowed in premises under the control of the Amida-shu, nor in any meeting or event over which Amida-shu has control or jurisdiction.

Chapter Ten: Equitable Settlement of Plaints, Complaints and Disputes

1. The duties of the Peacemaker include concern with all matters relating to ethical or unethical conduct by members, disputes, complaints, and other matters of proper procedure, equity between members, and good standing of individuals and of the School as a whole. The perspective to be adopted is that of equity rather than legalism. The aim is to restore confidence between people and make it possible for all to go forward together or at least

for future harm to be minimised and conditions for long term healing to be established.

2. The term complaint shall refer to allegations made of a member of the School by non-members and the term plaint shall refer to allegations of a member of the school made by one or more other members of the school.
3. If any member of the Amida School, by his or her conduct or publicly expressed views, appears to be denying the validity or abusing the spirit of the ordinances of the School, or bringing it into disrepute, and private counsel has proved to no avail, then experienced Order members may be appointed by the Peacemaker to attempt to restore him or her into unity and to ascertain whether a basis for grievance or a cause of suffering exists that may be rectified. If it appears that efforts to rectify the situation are and are likely to continue to be without their desired effect, then the convocation concerned or the Order as a whole may record a minute of disunity with his or her action and, in exceptional circumstances, the Order may terminate membership of the Order or of the School.
4. Complaints: Complaints shall follow a procedure to be established in due course. All complaints shall, in the first instance, be notified to the Peacemaker who will immediately notify the Head of the Order and the person complained against (the complainee).