



Western Chan Fellowship CIO ("WCF")

Ethical Statement

Guidance for WCF Employees, Volunteers and Members

Scope of this document

This document is intended to support skilful actions by those in positions of authority in WCF activities. Whilst it applies to all WCF activities, it also serves as guidance for all other activities in our lives. Participants in WCF activities who are not WCF members may not subscribe to this specific code of ethics but we do ask all to behave ethically when attending WCF events: being considerate of others and not harming them, not stealing, no inappropriate expressions of sexuality, being truthful, and maintaining sobriety.

The guidance is to protect all those attending WCF events and to allow the Dharma teachings to flourish in an environment that is safe and free from harm.

Statement of Ethics

WCF affirms the equality between all people, irrespective of any differences in age, race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, gender realignment, marriage, pregnancy, or belief.

The fundamental basis of our ethical code is the 5 Precepts. The Precepts are a guide to our actions which we voluntarily aim to uphold. We know that we may on occasions fail to act in accord with the Precepts and equally some situations may require us to break one precept in order to keep another. As WCF staff we endeavour to act in accord with these precepts to support our practice and that of others.

- i. **Not killing** This precept refers to the interdependence of all life. WCF seeks to respect and protect life, and particularly the lives of those we support or teach through WCF activities. WCF also commits to the principle of not harming through offering vegetarian and vegan food on retreats.
- ii. **Not stealing** This precept refers to not taking that which is not given. It means behaving scrupulously in dealing with WCF money and property. It also involves behaving honestly in relation to others' property.
- iii. **No misuse of sexuality.** We are aware that as a person starts to explore the liberation that Dharma practice can provide, it is easy to confuse strength of feeling for the Dharma with an attraction to the individual serving as their main point of contact with WCF and to the Buddhist tradition more generally. This precept involves not causing harm through an expression of sexuality, or the sexual exploitation of participants through abuse of the position of authority and power that dharma teachers of all rank, group leaders and others acting on behalf of WCF (such as cooks and guestmasters) may be perceived to have.



- iv. **Not lying** This means speaking what is true. It also involves speaking with clarity and kindness to others in all communications including online.
- v. **Not using alcohol or intoxicants.** We are aware of the great suffering caused by the misuse of intoxicants of all types. This precept means not using intoxicants (including alcohol). We acknowledge that some may use alcohol in moderation, in such a way that heedless or unskillful action does not occur. No alcohol or other intoxicants may be used on retreat, in dharma group situations, or whilst teaching in a WCF context.

Supporting our Statement of Ethics

WCF supports its teachers and group leaders through mentoring in which more senior group leaders are a resource for less experienced group leaders and each other. This provides an avenue for any teacher or group leader to discuss ethical dilemmas that they may face in some aspect of their teaching or leadership role and they are expected to make appropriate use of mentoring for this and other purposes. WCF is also a member of the Network of Buddhist Organisations (NBO) and supports the NBO in their work of seeking common ground and cooperation between the different schools of Buddhism within the UK. We are also members of the European Buddhist Union (EBU) which aims to encourage cooperation between Buddhists in Europe; our senior teachers attend EBU teachers meetings.

WCF is a member of the Interfaith Network and supports their aim of promoting good relations between people of different faiths in the United Kingdom.

WCF is careful to appoint suitable teachers and group leaders. The appointment of WCF Guiding Teacher is a lifetime appointment, unless the Teacher chooses to retire or effectively retires, or is unable to continue due to incapacity, or in exceptional circumstances were to be dismissed by WCF on the grounds of gross misconduct. Appointment of all other teachers and leaders is for five years at a time, with the expectation that their authorisation will be renewed at the end of five years, but only after scrutiny.

Feb 2024

Adopted by WCF trustees – 2024.04.09