

Amida Shu
Provisions for Structure,
Continuity & Governance

Revised 8th September 2020

Chapter One: The Amida School: Doctrine & Mission

1. The Amida Shu is a form of original Buddhism, affirming the trikaya nature of Buddha, the bombu nature of the adherent and the primacy of taking refuge, especially by reciting the nembutsu, among Buddhist practices.
2. The Amida Shu is a sangha, understood to be a communion of persons practising faith in Amida, Buddha, Dharma, Sangha and Pure Land.
3. The Amida Shu is led by the Amida Order. The Amida Order is a fellowship of immediate and descendent disciples of its teacher, head and founder.
4. The Amida Order consists of members of Amida Shu who take responsibility for the practical and spiritual affairs of the community, offer spiritual example and leadership, and practise humility and co-operation, under authority when appropriate, following the guiding power of all Buddhas, and especially of Buddha Amida, the Buddha of all acceptance, in whose vows we place our faith.
5. In the Amida Shu there is to be no discrimination on the basis of sex, race, age, sexual orientation or worldly status except as is necessary to protect the young and vulnerable.
6. The Amida Shu 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.
7. Ethics:
 - (a) The Amida Shu respects the Buddhist ethical tradition and applies it to society as well as to the individual. The social stance of Amida Shu is set out in the document “Amida Shu: Social and Religious Manifesto” (see appendix).
 - (b) Members of Amida Shu are encouraged to follow lifestyles compatible with these ideals and aims. We hold to the vision of the Pure Land here and hereafter.
 - (c) Meat, alcohol, weapons and non-medical mind-altering drugs 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.
8. The Amida Shu reveres Amida Buddha, Shakyamuni Buddha, Maitreya Buddha and all Buddhas of wisdom and compassion together with Quan Shi Yin, Tai Shi Chi and all the other great bodhisattva saviours and exemplars.
9. The Amida Shu honours all Buddhist sages and ancestors of all schools and particularly reveres the sages Shan Tao and Honen, their teachers and disciples.
10. Mission: The mission of the Amida Shu is to foster 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.
11. Within the Amida School there is established the Order of Amida Buddha, also termed the Amida Order (herein, the Order) for short. All members of the Order are members of the Shu. Where membership of the Shu 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. Shu members are practitioners and faith followers. Order members are Shu members who take responsibility for organising and conducting the affairs of the Amida community.

Chapter Two: Membership

1. The Amida Shu: Persons who, by invitation, take the Five Refuges and affirm their adherence to and willingness to accept the standards and ordinances of the 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 Amida Shu, may be referred to as Amida Buddhists or Amidists, provided that they continue to reaffirm their commitment in the customary manner as established in this chapter, and shall be known as “those having a karmic affinity with Amitabha Buddha.”

2. Criteria for admission to the Shu: Membership of the Shu is by invitation. Persons invited shall be 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 Shu shall generally be persons who have been Buddhist, evidenced by having taken the threefold refuge, more than one year previously and have been regular attendees at Amida Shu meetings or involved in the life of the Amida Shu in an active way for not less than one year.

3. Admission Procedure:

(a) 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. Admission ceremonies will always be included in the Bodhi Retreat held by the Order in the first week of December whenever there are candidates.

(b) Admission to membership of Amida Shu and to the Amida Order is by invitation. The Head of the Order shall from time to time, and every summer, request Conclave to propose candidates for membership.

(b)(i) For Shu admissions: When a list has been agreed, banns shall be published to the membership of the Shu to give opportunity for comment or objection, and, shortly after, letters of invitation shall be issued.

(b)(ii) For Order membership the Head of the Order or his/her representative shall communicate with the invitee directly.

4. i. Confirmation: Members of the Shu, not being Order Members, are not required to reaffirm their faith and commitment to the shu, but are encouraged to do so after the first year and every two or so years thereafter, or otherwise according to local custom with this as general guidance.

ii. All shu-members will be considered members in perpetuity unless and until the registrar is informed otherwise by the particular shu-member concerned, or by the shu-member's mentor or by the Order member responsible for the local congregation.

iii. Members who have left the shu but wish to return can be reinstated, with immediate effect, when this is agreed with their mentor and the Order member responsible for the local congregation, if there is one.

iv. All such changes shall be noted and reviewed by conclave at its subsequent meeting.

5. 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 4 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 Complaint.

6. Order Members:

- (a) Persons who, by invitation, 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.
- (b) All Order members are members of Amida Shu.
- (c) All Order members are immediate or descendent disciples of the Head of the Order.
- (d) Order membership is a solemn commitment intended to be life long.
- (e) Termination of membership of the Order is a grave matter and should only occur after careful consideration 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.
- (f) In cases of resignation, re-admittance should be a gradual, step by step process in order that all concerned can have confidence in the goodwill of all parties.

7. Entry into the Amida Order:

- (a) Admission to the Amida Order shall be by ordination or by invitation to lay membership. A Lay member shall be termed a Mitra.
- (b) Ordination shall come at the completion of a period of aspirancy. When somebody shows an interest in aspirancy, the Head of the Order shall appoint two or three persons to separately interview the candidate to test their motivation and suitability. One of these persons shall be the head or deputy of ministry and one shall be an amitarya. When they have interviewed the candidate they will make a recommendation to the head of the order who shall make a final decision.
- (c) Proposals to invite persons to become Mitras shall be made at Conclave. Each case will be considered on its merits. However, the following factors will be considered to be favourable indicators:
 - (i) prior membership of Amida Shu
 - (ii) regular Buddhist practice, especially of nembutsu
 - (iii) vegetarian diet, abstinence from alcohol and drugs, and other indicators of a Buddhist lifestyle
 - (iv) shared life with one or more other Order Members
 - (v) holding a functional role or responsibility
 - (vi) past services rendered to the Order or to the Dharma at large.
- (d) When Conclave has recommended and the Order has approved, the Head of the Order shall make the final decision and if appropriate invite the person to membership personally or via a representative.

Chapters Three: General Structure

1. The First Generation: 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 Dharmavidya in creating the new Amida ordained sangha. A lengthy process of consultation over precepts led to the emergence of two tracks of ordination, that for amitaryas and that for ministers. 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. Maitrisimha became the first Lay Order Member. 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 Shu Members. Thus Amida Shu came into being. In December 2006 the second convocation of the Order was created. In due course there were three convocations. However, over time the convocation structure gradually fell into disuse and in the 2014 revision provisions for convocations were dropped.
2. Within the Amida Order there shall be ordinal, spiritual and functional roles and corresponding relationships.
3. The Amida Order is a spiritual bond and it shall not hold material assets. Where practical work is to be done in the world, organisations with a civic structure appropriate to the task, location and circumstances will be created. Otherwise assets shall be held by individual members in trust for the agreed use.
4. Civic organisations that are effectively under the control of Amida members are herein referred to as Amida Organisations. At the time of writing these include Amida Trust, Amida Mosaic, Amida USA, International Zen Therapy Institute.
5. Amida Affiliate organisations shall be any body that wishes to support and is accepted by the Order as being supportive and that is accepted as having affiliate status by an Order Meeting. These may be bodies established by Amida Shu members to carry out socially useful tasks or may be independent organisations that wish to be associated with the work and purposes of the Amida Shu.
6. Amida Meetings commonly include gatherings for sharing and for practice. In a gathering for sharing it is normal to pass a token object in order that each member have opportunity to share. In these meetings seniority and roles are suspended, all meeting as equals before Amida Buddha in order to listen to one another and to the opening of the Light. In a gathering for practice, ordinal roles take precedence and appropriate liturgy is employed.

Chapter 4: Ordinal Roles

1. Ordinal Roles

(a) Ordinal roles are positions within the Amida Order defined by refuge or vow standing and within each standing by duration.

(b) Progression between standings is not simply a function of personal merit, nor is it automatic, but is to serve the needs of the Dharma and sangha as a whole.

(c) Seniority within categories is not according to merit but simply to preserve order and dignity in the community.

(d) Decisions regarding progression or change between categories are made by the Head of the Order in Conclave.

2. The Head of the Amida Shu

The Head of Amida Shu shall be the Head of the Lotus Sangha and of the Amida Order, and recognised as the foremost acharya.

3. Vocations

(a) There shall be three vocations of membership in the Amida Order, namely mitras, ministers and amitaryas.

(b) Ministers and amitaryas are ordained members.

(c) Mitras may also be referred to as lay order members.

4. Ordained Sangha

(a) There shall be first ordination and full ordination. Full ordination is conceived to be life long.

(b) Prior to first ordination there shall be a probationary period of training and preparation. Persons in this preparatory stage are termed "aspirants". Admission to aspirancy is via a ceremony in which the candidate takes the Fivefold Refuge and Ten Mahayana Precepts.

(c) There shall be a Training Scheme involving periodic guidance and progress review. Those on the Training Scheme are termed "trainees". All aspirants are trainees. A trainee who ordains as a gankonin or novice continues to be a trainee until opting out. Gankonin and novices who are not already trainees can opt in to the trainee scheme if they so choose. At a date to be chosen by the Head of the Order the offer of traineeship will be extended to mitras.

(d) Candidates are called to first ordination by the Head of the Order in Conclave. In general, they will be persons who, during their period of aspirancy, have manifested deep and consistent faith and put it into practice. They should be of good moral character and have made significant progress in the Training Scheme and have made an election toward a ministry or amitarya vocation in consultation with their mentor.

(e) After first ordination toward ministry, persons are termed "gankonin". After first ordination toward becoming amitaryas they are termed "novices". At first ordination, the preceptor shall transmit precepts to the candidate and these are confirmed at full ordination.

(f) Aspirants may, but need not, be members of the Shu or Order, but, upon first ordination, they become members of the Order and shall be required to meet the criteria for Order membership at that time. They also become disciples, if they are not so already.

(g) Gankonin receive a prescribed form of bodhisattva precepts. Novices receive the precepts of gankonin plus a prescribed form of renunciant precepts.

(h) At entrance into aspirancy and at each stage of ordination on either track, candidates may optionally take the chastity or celibacy vows to last until their next stage of ordination or until a dispensation is given by the Head of the Order.

(i) The Head of the Order may grant dispensation to vary precepts without loss of standing

for a limited period for an individual in cases where doing so will further the Dharma.

5. Ordination Ceremonies

- (a) Amida Shu: Ceremonies to admit or renew entrance to Amida Shu may be conducted by ordained order members.
- (b) The Order: Ceremonies to admit or renew entrance to the Amida Order may be conducted by amitaryas or ministers.
- (c) Ordinations: Ceremonies of ordination may be conducted by a member of the Lotus Sangha.
- (d) Acharya recognition: See clause 6 below.
- (e) For all ceremonies under this clause, there should normally be at least four members of Amida Shu present to conduct the ceremony and act as witnesses. When less than the minimum number of sangha are present the admission shall only be valid if confirmed within twelve months by Conclave.

6. Amida Acharya Lotus Sangha

- (a) There shall be a sangha within the Shu designated as the Amida Acharya Lotus Sangha [hereafter the 'Lotus Sangha'] made up of those recognised as acharyas in a suitable ceremony by the Head of the Order.
- (b) In the normal case, the following criteria shall apply:
 - (i) The candidate shall have been ordained more than ten years ago.
 - (ii) During and throughout the period of ordination the candidate has practised diligently in the nembutsu way.
 - (iii) The candidate has, for more than two years, demonstrably fulfilled the role of being a teacher of the Dharma.
 - (iv) Without departing from the spirit and meaning of the Dharma, the candidate shall have shown skill and originality in his or her work of teaching and transmitting the Dharma.
 - (v) The candidate has at least one disciple who shall themselves be a member of Amida Shu.
- (b) In the ceremony of advancement to acharya, the disciple shall be present and acknowledge the candidate as teacher and him or herself as disciple.
- (c) The head of the order, or his appointee, who must him or herself be a member of the Lotus Sangha, shall transmit the five lotus vows to the candidate who shall affirm his or her commitment to them. The five vows are as follows:
 - (i) The White Lotus Vow: To meet with the Lotus Sangha in the Pure Land
 - (ii) The Green Lotus Vow: In the meantime, while this mortal life endures, to care for this world
 - (iii) The Red Lotus Vow: To care for the spiritual wellbeing and progress of all sentient beings generally and of each who seeks the Dharma specifically
 - (iv) The Blue Lotus Vow: To do everything one can to make oneself a fitting instrument for this work
 - (v) The Gold Lotus Vow: To serve and make offerings to myriad Buddhas
- (c) The candidate shall make a declaration as follows:

“Before all the Buddhas and the members of the sangha, I solemnly and joyfully undertake

- to dedicate all the learning, practice and faith developed through my years of experience in the Buddhist sangha to the benefit of the future of the religious community and the spiritual benefit of those who choose to follow the path;
- to myself continue to mature in the path and to live my life both secretly and overtly in concordance with the Dharma for the sake of all sentient beings to the very best of my

ability; and

- to develop my identity as a teacher, my particular strengths and abilities, in the knowledge of all as skilful means, while yet recognising fully and readily acknowledging my continuing bombu nature.

I shall not use any authority vested in my position for personal ends, personal gain, comfort or advantage, but solely for the good of trainees and the community as a whole.

I shall go forth once again in the light of Amida with whatever merit is granted me through that supreme grace.

May the Buddhas and bodhisattvas and all spiritual ancestors and devas guide me and protect the Buddha Way.”

(d) The head of the Order may vary the provisions of this clause as the case and circumstance may require. Thus:

(i) exceptionally, there may be acharyas who are not members of the Order, who are acknowledged as teachers of Dharma but do not take the Lotus Vows and, therefore, do not become members of the Lotus Sangha.

(ii) exceptionally, and hypothetically, a lay person could become an acharya if, although not ordained, they meet all other criteria fully.

(iii) exceptionally a person with less than ten years service in the Amida Order may be accepted in recognition of prior service in other Buddhist sanghas.

(iv) as the case may be.

(e) Members of the Lotus Sangha continue to follow their vows and functions as ministers or amitaryas in addition to their role as teacher of the Dharma.

7. Seniority

(a) Seniority within ordinal standings is by length of time in that standing. However, there is no seniority as between mitras or between shu members who are not order members.

(b) Seniority as between standings is as follows: Head of the Order, Acharyas, Amitaryas, Ministers, Novices, Gankonin, Mitras, other Shu members.

8. Forms of address

(a) Ordained celibate members of the order may be addressed as Venerable.

(b) Other ordained members of the Order may be addressed as Reverend.

(c) Acharyas may be addressed as Venerable Master or Reverend Master as the case may be, or as Acharya.

(d) Other designations may be used according to local custom, having regard to equivalence with other faith communities. Thus, for instance, the Head of ministry may be addressed as His/Her/Your Grace in interfaith contexts.

(e) Informally, lay members may address any ordained member as sensei, bhante, or other equivalent term of respect.

9. Disciples

The term disciple designates a relationship of devotion as well as education, long term in intent, more significant than student.

Chapter Five: Spiritual Roles

1. There are four spiritual roles: acharya, disciple, mentor, and mentoree.

2. Acharya & Disciple:

(a) All members of the Amida Order are immediate or descendent disciples of the Head of the Order. They may, in addition to having an acharya, also have one or more mentors.

(b) Acharyas are Buddhist masters and may accept disciples.

(c) To become a disciple the individual must ask and receive the blessing of both the chosen acharya and of the Head of the Order. Disciples do not have to be Order or Shu members.

(d) Discipleship is, by intention, long term. Disciples have a duty of care toward their acharya, pray for his/her long life and blessing and should assist the acharya's mission. To take an acharya is an act of refuge, since the acharya represents the Three Jewels.

(e) The acharya's duty to the disciple is to give a shining example of the Dharma life and to foster the disciple's flourishing and advancement in the Dharma.

3. Mentor & Mentoree:

(a) All members of Amida Shu shall have a mentor, who may, but need not, also be their acharya. Acharyas can be mentors to persons who are not their disciples. Other Shu members may also be mentors.

(b) A mentoree may, optionally, regard their mentor as a master, even though this will not be formally acknowledged by the Order unless and until the mentor should become an acharya.

(c) Except by dispensation, mentors should always be senior in Ordinal position to their mentorees.

(d) to have a mentor is to become a student or trainee in order to learn the ways of the Dharma appropriate to one's position and circumstance. Mentors may also offer counselling and pastoral care.

(e) Mentors do not charge for their service, but mentorees may give gifts (dana) to mentors in cash or kind.

(f) Mentoring relationships are for the time being and may be changed whenever convenient with the agreement of all parties involved.

(g) A Shu member who finds him or herself without a mentor should approach a member of the Order for guidance.

Chapter Six: Functional Roles

1. Except where specified, there is no necessary correspondence between ordinal and functional roles or between spiritual and functional roles. In carrying out a functional role an individual might sometimes be carrying senior authority to their acharya or to persons senior to them in ordinal status. Proper respect should be shown by both parties.
2. (a) There shall be a Deputy Head of the Order
(b) The Deputy Head of the Order shall generally be an acharya.
(c) The Deputy shall represent the Head of the Order and the Order in public situations when the Head of the Order is not present.
3. (a) There shall be a Head of Ministry (Bishop)
(b) The Head of Ministry shall generally be the most senior acharya minister, except that the Head of Ministry, Head of the Order and Deputy Head shall be three different people.
(c) The Head of Ministry shall have responsibility for the care of the ministry function and co-ordination of the duties of all those upon that track.
4. The Head of the Order shall have a Senior Jissha, a Close Jissha and such other jisshas as he or she may from time to time appoint. The senior jissha shall represent the Head of the Order to the Shu and Order when he is not present and keep the Shu and Order informed of the Head of the Order's teachings and views.
5. The Deputy Head of the Order and the Head of Ministry, with the consent of the Head of the Order, shall be entitled to appoint one or more jissha to assist them in their duties. The most senior jissha to the Head of Ministry may also be known as Deputy Head of Ministry.
6. The Order shall have a secretary whose duty shall include seeing that meetings are convened and, where appropriate, correctly recorded and reported, ensuring that proper records are kept, and ensuring that in the conduct of the affairs of the Order the procedures in Provisions are followed. This role shall incorporate the former roles of secretary and archivist.
7. The Order shall have a registrar who shall be empowered to invite and appoint such deputies as are needed for the effective conduct of business.
8. The Head of the Order shall appoint the Deputy Head, Head of Ministry and his or her own jisshas. The secretary and registrar shall be appointed at an Order Meeting. In the case of death, resignation or incapacity of the Deputy, the Head of the Order shall invite another order member to fill the role of Deputy if a suitable person is available. In case of death, resignation or incapacity of the Head of Ministry, the Head of the Order shall appoint a successor or deputy as appropriate, who shall be a Minister in the Order.
9. Functional Roles also arise
 - (a) through the establishment of Amida Organisations. These correspond to the civic structures of those organisations.
 - (b) for specific services and functions of the Order, as, for instance, editing newsletters.

Chapter Seven: Meetings & Retreats

1. Whole Order Meetings shall be held at least once per year, generally in June. This meeting shall be called by the secretary giving at least four weeks notice of dates and venue. Order Meetings are not primarily decision making meetings. They are times to share experience and listen, support one another in faith and practice, learn from one another and advance a process of opinion formation and discernment.

2. Bodhi Retreat

(a) There shall be a retreat, known as the Bodhi Retreat, in the first week of December each year.

(b) Bodhi Retreats shall include

(i) An extended period of nembutsu chanting

(ii) A meeting of Order members

(iii) Ceremonies for taking refuge, for admittance to Amida Shu and for admittance to the Amida Order and such other ceremonies of confirmation or advancement for which there are suitable celebrants present whenever there are candidates

3. Quarterly Meetings shall be meetings open to all Shu members. These are normally held in the spring and autumn in those countries or regions where a number of Shu members can meet together.

4. Sesshin shall be five day retreats. These will be held as and when there are suitable persons prepared to participate. There is a system of five such sesshin:

(i) Anjin (Settled Faith) Sesshin, including Chih Quan, Nembutsu, and Silence

(ii) Nei Quan Sesshin, including Contrition, Nei Quan and Writing a life confession

(iii) Prayer & Worship Sesshin including 108 prostrations and devotional practices

(iv) Sila Sesshin, including Precept Recitation and discussion of Ethics & Social Engagement

(v) Rhetoric & Ritual Sesshin, including giving Dharma talks, Mondo, and Principles and practice of ceremonial

It is intended that all ordained persons and such other Shu members as choose shall in due course have done all five sesshin at least once.

5. Conclave

(a) Conclave shall be a meeting open to all ordained members of the Order.

(b) It shall be held at least once per year, commonly in June immediately before a Whole Order Meeting.

(c) It shall be the duty of Conclave

(i) to receive and make proposals for all matters relating to admittance, advancement and confirmation within the Order. Any ordained member of the Order may put names forward.

Thus Conclave shall draw up a list of all persons recommended for 1) admittance to the Shu, 2) admittance to the Order, 3) Initial and full Ordination.

(ii) to consider all matters arising in relation to proposed changes of vocation

(iv) to review the working of the mentoring system and ensure that all Shu members are provided with a suitable mentor

(v) to consider all matters arising in relation to complaints and disputes, where necessary and appropriate appoint persons to look into and report upon such matters and specify the parameters for such work, and where necessary and appropriate to adjudicate.

(d) No minutes are kept of the proceedings of conclave but a declaration will be made in

relation to each area of duty transacted stating the final conclusions or decision of the meeting. This declaration shall be circulated to all order members.

6. General Meetings of the Order may be convened by the secretary if petitioned by 40% of the Order membership or if it is generally apparent that there is a need. General Meetings shall only be called when there is a serious need for collective decision making that cannot be dealt with by regular Order Meetings, Conclave or the processes outlined in Chapter 8. General meetings require four weeks notice to all members. The quorum for a General Meeting shall be 60% of the Order membership.

7. Sectional Meetings. Ordinal categories, such as acharyas, amitaryas, ministers, or mitras, may meet whenever appropriate by mutual arrangement. Such meetings may be formal or informal. If formal, then all members of the category must have been given at least four weeks notice and minutes should be kept. Such meetings may register their minutes with the secretary of the Order if they choose, thus putting their proceedings on record. Any minutes of this kind can be made available to any Shu member. Whether formal or informal, any such meeting may institute the start of a consultation process by generating a yellow or green paper as appropriate according to the provisions of Chapter Eight

Chapter Eight: Consultations and Decision Processes

1. (a) There are two types of decisions. Firstly, there are decisions about specific instances where an action is required. These will normally be taken by the responsible person or group at the time, generally after consultation with those affected or involved. Secondly, there are decisions about procedures, customs and how things are, in general, to be done and conducted. In this chapter we are concerned with the latter.

(b) The basis of reference for such matters is this document of Provisions and its subsidiary documents which are:

i) Provisions

ii) Amida Shu: Social and Religious Manifesto

iii) The precepts established for ordained persons

(c) Formal channels exist for consultation and decision making on matters affecting the customs and procedures of Amida Shu. These involve a cascade procedure for the refinement of proposals ultimately culminating in formal enactment. The stages may be referred to as the yellow, green, white and red stages of the process.

(d) The sequence set out in this chapter 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 or Acharyas or a regional group before being made available to the whole Shu.

2. Consultation (yellow): Any member or group of members of the Shu may put forward a proposal stating what problem it is intended to rectify and how. This need not be a finalised proposal, can be in the form of high-lighting a difficulty and asking for ideas, but should generally include some constructive proposition also. Such petition shall normally be circulated on one of the electronic media loops. The heading should begin with the words "Consultation (yellow):" followed by the topic. Thus, for instance, "Consultation (yellow): Proposal to modify criteria for admission to Amida Shu."

3. Consultation (green): A consultation (green) paper may be initiated by any Order Member, in response to a yellow paper or otherwise. Green papers are intended to put important issues before the membership. They should provide relevant information, set out alternatives and invite contribution.

4. Cascade: A green paper will normally be submitted to a sub-group initially in order to gauge support or help refine the proposal. Then it will be submitted to the whole Order and the ensuing debate may result in further refinement of the proposal or the adoption or incorporation of counter-proposals or a widening or narrowing of the scope of the proposal. Sometimes a proposal may divide into more than one item at this stage. At any stage in this process the author of the proposal, the Secretary to the Order or the Head of the Order may open the debate to all members of the Shu and this will normally happen as soon as it is clear what the general frame of discussion is.

5. Consultation (white): At any stage in the above process the Head of the Order or a person delegated by him/her for the purpose may convert the proposal into a white paper. A white paper proposes the precise element in provisions that it is proposed shall be deleted and the precise wording that is proposed to be substituted, thus offering a definite 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. Time will be allowed for discussion, reflection and objection in the

light of which the Head of the Order shall decide whether to incorporate further revisions, or reject suggested revisions, in which case he shall make a statement to this effect, or enact what is generally accepted while putting any remaining suggestions into a new consultation process by initiating or inviting a further yellow, green or white paper as appropriate.

6. 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 Shu 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 Shu and will be preceded by serious efforts to achieve consensus. In the last resort, the Head of the Order must decide. The Head of the Order shall place before the Order a numbered draft of a revised edition of Provisions that incorporates both the matter enacted and any resultant modifications to other parts of Provisions. This new edition of the Provisions shall then be definitive.

Chapter Nine: Records

1. The Secretary to the Order shall

(a) establish a record of Acts of the Amida Order. This shall include a record of

- i. Formal decisions made by the Order in meetings;
- ii. Dates and proceedings of General Meetings of the Order
- iii. Installation of acharyas.
- iv. Such significant events as are deemed worthy of record and note.

(b) keep copies of all documents deemed to be of value as a record of the history and development of the Shu and Order, including constitutional documents, liturgical documents, newsletters, publicity materials, photographs, press cuttings and other similar materials.

(c) keep dated copies of successive editions of Provisions for future reference.

(d) keep a Register of all formal complaints heard by Conclave and the final outcome, nothing more, and shall keep an archive of all relevant documents for a period of six years after which they will be destroyed.

2. The Registrar shall keep:

(a) Register of Shu Members indicating

- i. name,
- ii. address
- iii. date of birth
- iv. date of admission
- v. date and manner of cessation
- vi. name of mentor(s)

(b) Register of Order Members indicating

- i. name,
- ii. address
- iii. date of birth
- iv. date of admission
- v. date and manner of cessation
- vi. name of acharya.

(c) Register of Amida Organisations and Affiliated Organisations indicating

- i. name of organisation
- ii. address
- iii. nature of organisation (commercial, non-profit, trust, etc)
- iv. the names and offices of Shu members holding significant positions in the organisation.

(d) Review of Active Membership

(i) In 2020 and every three years thereafter, the registrar shall send a letter to all order members requesting a report. The request shall be along the following lines, though the registrar shall have discretion over the precise detail:

Dear ...

Namo Amida Bu. You have been a member of the Order of Amida Buddha since [insert date].

As a matter of course, the Order requests that periodically you make a short report back on your involvement so that we all can appreciate each other's roles and situations. I am,

therefore, now writing on behalf of the Order to request that you reflect upon the matter and make such a report. We would like to hear such things as:

- are you still dedicated to the Buddha and saying nembutsu?
- are you propagating the Dharma?
- do you take responsibility in some way within the Sangha?
- have you performed ceremonies (weddings, funerals, blessings, ordinations or other advancements)?
- how is being a member of the Order important to you?
- what are your intentions in this regard for the future?
- what else would you like to report?

I look forward to hearing from you in the near future. Please reply promptly, either directly to me, or by putting your report onto the Order e-mail loop. It will be my task to gather the responses from all Order members and report to Conclave. This feedback enables us all to judge the life and vibrancy of the sangha and its mission, thereby encouraging one another.

Respectfully in the Dharma

...

Registrar

(ii) Order members shall respond to this letter appropriately and may do so either by a private communication direct to the registrar or by putting their report on the Order or Shu distribution loops.

(iii) The registrar shall gather the reports and make a synopsis of the activity of the Order to be presented at the next subsequent Conclave meeting.

Chapter Ten: Equitable Settlement of Complaints and Disputes

1. From time to time in any community there arise inter-personal difficulties. These may relate to grievances, to rivalry or simply to clashes of personality. When these arise the persons involved are enjoined to work for a solution and reconciliation and other parties may assist as they can. We should all look to our own practice and goodwill in the first instance. However, occasionally matters become intractable and a more formal procedure for resolution is called for. Such matters shall be under the general supervision of Conclave which may appoint suitable persons to investigate, mediate and make recommendations upon which Conclave shall adjudicate.
2. In the resolution of disputes or grievances, the perspective to be adopted is that of equity and facilitation 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. However, it should be recognised that cases exist where harm has been caused and apology or restitution may be in order and action of this kind may be required by Conclave or its representative. Appeal shall be to the Head of the Order so long as the latter is not a party to the dispute, in which case to the next most senior member of the Order not implicated.
3. If any member of the Amida Shu, by his or her conduct or publicly expressed views, appears to be denying the validity or abusing the spirit of the ordinances of the Shu, or bringing it into disrepute, and private counsel has proved to no avail, then experienced Order members may be appointed by Conclave 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 Conclave may record a minute of disunity with the person in question and, in exceptional circumstances, may terminate membership of the Order or of the Shu.

Chapter Eleven: Succession

1. Election:

In the event of the Head of the Order dying, retiring or becoming incapacitated, the Deputy Head of the Order 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. The secretary to the order shall act as returning officer, collecting votes and declaring results. If the secretary is a candidate, then the acting Head of the Order will designate a new person to be secretary.
 - ii. The registrar will produce a list of persons entitled to vote.
 - iii. Each member of the Order of more than one years standing at the date at which the post of Head of the Order became vacant shall have one transferable vote
 - iv. If a candidate receives more than fifty percent of the votes cast in any round of voting, they shall be declared elected.
 - v. If a round is inconclusive, the candidate with least votes shall not stand in the subsequent round.
 - vi. The secretary shall not vote but in the case of an equality of votes, the secretary may cast the deciding vote.

[Explanatory note: This means that in the first round, those voting can vote for any candidate. The result will then be declared. If no candidate has more than fifty percent of the votes, the candidate with least votes will be eliminated and there will be a second round with the remaining candidates. The election continues thus until only one candidate remains]

2. Affirmation:

- (a) The new Head of the Order will be declared foremost acharya.
- (b) All members of the Order shall meet with the new Head and affirm him or her as the spiritual teacher of the Order and confirm their commitment to the Order. Ideally this will happen in order of ordinal seniority, but practical circumstances will also need to be taken into account. In some cases an electronic meeting may suffice pro tem but a personal face to face meeting should take place as soon as is practically possible. This process will be overseen and reviewed by Conclave which shall ensure that any person who fails to meet the new Head of the Order clarifies their position. These meetings shall be completed within one year of the new Head of the Order taking office.

3. Secession:

- (a) 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 or to become independent. Any person

seceding will thereupon cease to be a disciple of an acharya who remains a member.

(b) In the case where such a person is an acharya, their disciples will be allowed individually to decide whether to accompany the acharya in secession or remain as members of the Order. In the latter case they will then cease to be disciples of the acharya and may choose to re-affiliate as a disciple of the Head of the Order or an other acharya within the Order.

4. Confirmation:

At a General Meeting of the Order convened after the end of the Affirmation Year, the new Head of the Order will be confirmed in office, and declared to be the new Head of the Order, having been affirmed by all continuing Order members.

5. Reconfiguration:

On the appointment of a new Head of the Order, the holders of the offices of Deputy, Head of Ministry, Jissha to the Head of the Order and any other posts to which the Head of the Order customarily makes direct appointment shall step down. The new Head of the Order shall then choose a new team. Existing acharyas will form an advisory council and the Head of the Order will consult with this council on matters of structure and policy.

Appendix
Amida Shu: Social and Religious Manifesto
(Edition 081228)

Preamble

This manifesto is a code of guidance issued under and as a part of Provisions for Structure, Continuity and Governance of Amida Shu (hereinafter ‘Provisions’). Processes for consultation and change established in Provisions apply equally to this document.

Chapter One: Realising a Buddhist Society

1. The Amida Shu respects the Buddhist ethical tradition, and applies it to society as well as to the individual. This document sets out the Shu’s current understanding and collective assertion concerning the implications of Buddhist ethics for social life. Members of Amida Shu are expected not to actively oppose this manifesto in their social life, though they are also encouraged to participate in its refinement and improvement through the consultation processes established by Provisions.
2. The Amida School supports the transforming work of all Buddhas in this and all worlds and seeks to understand the nature of the world that they intend. Such a world shall be one in which
 - i. kindness and harmony prevail;
 - ii. wrong speech is not heard;
 - iii. killing, warfare and the use of weapons ceases;
 - iv. animals are not eaten, raised for slaughter or treated harshly;
 - v. sexual abuse does not occur; and
 - vi. there is no resort to alcohol, tobacco and non-medical mind altering drugs or poisons.
 - vii. there are many places of beauty for the refreshment of heart and mind
 - viii. optimum conditions exist for beings to make progress in spirit, character and enlightenment

Chapter Two: Inter-Faith Relations

1. The Amida Shu seeks to maintain harmonious relations with other faith communities whenever this is possible without compromising basic ethical requirements. Conflict between faith communities is viewed as a serious threat to the faith of all people and to be avoided to the utmost degree. Active search for co-operation and understanding is advocated.
2. It shall not be regarded as in any degree a betrayal for members of Amida Shu to join members of other faiths in their devotions so long as these do not entail harm to sentient beings or the advocacy of immorality. Rather such communion is seen as fulfilment of the wish of Amida Tathagata as expressed in the 23rd and 24th vows and of Honen Shonin’s declaration that once the nembutsu has been established by selection as one’s core practice it may be expressed in all manner of means.

Chapter Three: The Relation of Amida Shu Members to this Manifesto

1. The Amida School encourages its members to follow lifestyles compatible with the ideal and aims set out above and to hold to the vision of the Pure Land here and hereafter. The School, therefore, encourages members to adopt a vegetarian and tobacco and alcohol free lifestyle and also to eschew the use of weapons and involvement in coercive activities, but recognises that the circumstances of individuals are various and accepts that each individual must make his or her own decision in these matters.