

Becoming an IMS Teacher

At IMS, it is the responsibility of the Guiding Teachers (GTs) to approve a candidate to teach. Generally, candidates are recommended to the GTs by a senior IMS teacher. There are several avenues by which a teacher may come to be recommended for consideration as an IMS teacher: they may have completed a teacher training program from IMS or Spirit Rock; an established IMS teacher may have followed their development and mentored them to be a retreat teacher; they may have co-taught elsewhere with an established IMS teacher; for some very senior teachers, IMS teachers may have been their students; or they may have a strong reputation based on the teacher qualities below.

If they are approved to teach, they may first be invited to lead a weekend retreat, or to be part of an established teaching team for a longer retreat. After someone teaches at IMS for the first time, feedback is gathered from retreatants, staff and other teachers so that the GTs can appraise the teacher's work.

Essential Qualities

1. Depth of wisdom: an understanding of the Dharma that is expressed in their life.
2. Moral integrity: a commitment to living according to the ethical standards for IMS teachers.
3. Psychological health and self-understanding; maturity in conduct and in handling emotions; balance and equanimity in life situations.
4. Compassionate intention: an altruistic motivation in serving the Dharma.
5. Depth of meditative insight: experiential understanding of the three characteristics and four truths.
6. Teaching skills: the ability to express the Dharma well in communicating with others.
7. Multicultural competence: an understanding of race, racism and white privilege in the US, and an awareness of the practice issues that can arise from this history.

Desired Qualities

1. Breadth of meditative experience: vipassana, metta, samatha, daily life practices.
2. Skill in dealing with the strong psychological experiences that arise for participants on a retreat.
3. Commitment to their own practice and awakening.
4. Primary Dharma connection is to the Early Buddhist (or insight) tradition.
5. Knowledge of our tradition as found in the Pali canon, commentaries, and modern writings.
6. Consciousness and clarity around money, livelihood, sexuality and intimate relationships.
7. Generosity, lovingkindness and clarity.
8. Experience teaching in the silent intensive retreat form.
9. Commitment to the principle of teaching retreats on a dana basis.