

Code of Conduct and Ethical Guidelines for IZAUK

- V7.2 -

18 October, 2026 Revision

The International Zen Association – United Kingdom, a registered charity with the UK Charities Commission, serves as an umbrella group to bring together, and support the groups, dojos and centres in the UK, affiliated to the International Zen Association founded by Master Taisen Deshimaru.

As a Soto Zen Buddhist organisation, comprising other Soto Zen Buddhist organisations, IZAUK, its leaders and members, agree to certain aspects of conduct and ethical behaviour rooted in Buddhist doctrine, in Zen Tradition, and informed by the evolving standards of ethical responsibility, social awareness, and contemporary understandings of justice, equality, and human dignity.

Our understanding of conduct and behaviour is guided by Buddha's 8-fold path, the sixteen precepts of the Bodhisattva, and the 6 Mahayana paramitas. Within this document, we will note that Right Speech, and Right Action are particularly relevant. Additionally, as an affiliate of the International Zen Association, we recognise and adhere to their Code of Ethics as available on their website <https://www.zen-azi.org/en/charte-%C3%A9thique>.

This Code applies to all members, leaders, teachers, and volunteers affiliated with IZAUK and its member groups. Visitors, guests, and participants are also expected to respect it during sangha activities.

Any concerns about breaches of this code should be raised, confidentially, according to the IZAUK Grievance/Complaints procedure, as found on our website at <https://www.izauk.org/izauk-complaints-policy>.

Serious breaches of this Code may result in exclusion from activities, loss of recognition as an IZAUK affiliated dojo, removal from positions of IZAUK responsibility, suspension, or termination of membership, depending on the circumstances.

1. Communication and Conflict

- All communication within the sangha, whether in meetings, publications, online spaces, sangha activities (including zazen and sesshin), email, or personal conversations, should be truthful, civil, and respectful.
- We refrain from abusive or discriminatory language, harmful gossip, slander, or untruths.
- Confidentiality – Confidential or private information shared within the sangha or with group leaders is expected to remain confidential. Exceptions may be made if there is a reasonable concern that someone may be at risk of harming themselves or others, or if disclosure is required by law. Confidentiality does not override the duty

to safeguard vulnerable members, and members or leaders should act appropriately in such cases.

- Where conflicts arise, members are encouraged to engage in open, respectful dialogue, supported by mediators if necessary. IZAUK encourages reconciliation or peaceful resolutions wherever possible.
- Intention matters. Our communications and relationships are guided by intentions of kindness, respect, civility, non-harming, non-greed, compassion.

2. Behaviour and Conduct

Drawing from the wisdom of the precepts, with a commitment to cultivating kindness, respect, and safety in all our relationships, we present the following guidance in order that the sangha may be a place of trust and refuge for all.

Safe Participation

- Sangha leaders have a responsibility to help maintain a safe, stable, and harmonious practice environment.

Where a person's behaviour or speech places themselves or others:

- at risk of harm,
- seriously disrupts sangha activities,
- undermines the safety or inclusion of others,
- or prevents the healthy functioning of the group,

leaders may ask that person to step back from participation until appropriate support, reflection, or stability is in place.

Intoxication

- Any person who is intoxicated with alcohol or drugs should not participate in sangha activities (eg: zazen, study groups, etc.)
- Abuse of intoxicants can interfere with the responsibilities of being a group leader (and may result in responsibilities being suspended). Anyone struggling with substance abuse is encouraged to seek appropriate guidance or support.

Sexual misconduct

- Sexual misconduct, harassment, or inappropriate behaviour is not acceptable. This includes, but is not limited to: unwanted sexual attention or advances, coercion, sexualised comments or behaviour, inappropriate physical contact, misuse of authority for sexual or romantic purposes, or any behaviour that creates an intimidating, unsafe, or degrading environment.

Abuse of authority

- It is noted that persons who are in positions of authority (including, but not limited to, teachers, group leaders, and ordained members) have a particular duty to behave with integrity, and model appropriate behaviour and as such they may be held to a higher standard.
- Persons in positions of authority are cautioned about entering into a romantic or sexual relationship with anyone under their authority (eg: master and disciple), this

caution applies in any situation involving a significant power imbalance. We are mindful of the harm that can be done even under the most sincere consensual circumstances. Those in positions of authority are responsible for maintaining appropriate boundaries and exercising care at all times.

- Misuse of authority includes, but is not limited to:
 - Manipulating or coercing others into intimacy, donations, or unpaid labour.
 - Using one's position to shame, or control others
 - Financial exploitation, or misuse of sangha funds
 - Psychological or spiritual coercion (eg: claiming special insight or spiritual authority to override members' personal judgement or wellbeing.)
- A person in a position of authority has a responsibility to engage in dialogue and procedure when concerns are raised.

3. Safeguarding and Inclusion

- All sangha leaders share responsibility for safeguarding vulnerable members. Please see the IZAUK Safeguarding Policy for detailed guidance - <https://www.izauk.org/izauk-safeguarding-policy/> .
- IZAUK values diversity and strives to provide an inclusive environment in line with the Equality Act of 2010 where everyone is entitled to be free from discrimination, harassment, or victimisation regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

4. Finances and Organisational Integrity

The spirit of this guideline is to honour the fact that money collected for zazen and the Dharma does not belong to any individual, but to the sangha as a living expression of Buddha's teaching.

Funds collected for sangha activities are not personal income but "dharma funds". They are held in trust for the benefit of the sangha and its members and must be used solely for the purposes of practice, teaching, and sustaining the community.

Additionally, it is important to note that IZAUK is a registered charity and as such, IZAUK, and its groups, are expected to operate on a not-for-profit basis, regardless of a group's individual charity status.

- Group leaders must maintain transparency and accountability with respect to group finances.
- If a group closes, or ceases to operate, any remaining funds or assets, after settling reasonable expenses, must not be retained for personal use. Group leaders are required to declare the closing balance and, following a discussion with the IZAUK Committee and Trustees, disclose where the remaining funds and property are transferred. Group leaders may need to discuss this with the group's referent.
 - Remaining funds could be transferred to:
 - Another IZAUK-affiliated dojo or group or
 - IZAUK's general fund, or bursary fund, or

- The International Zen Association (AZI), or the Gendronnière Zen Association (AZG), or
 - Another recognised sangha led by a senior teacher connected to IZAUK or the AZI (eg: Sangha Tenborin, or Kanshoji Zen Association)
 - Or another appropriate registered charity with similar aim
- Group property and equipment (such as cushions, statues, altars, books, or other items purchased with dharma funds, or donated for sangha use) are likewise considered sangha assets, not personal possessions. When a group closes, these items should be transferred, transparently, as described above. Personal items lent to the sangha by the group leader are, of course, exempt.

As a Sangha, we encourage members and leaders to remain focused on awakening and compassionate action, without distraction, negligence, or self-serving aims. By following these guidelines, we uphold the integrity of Soto Zen practice in the UK, ensuring that our sangha is a place of refuge, trust, and awakening for all beings.