

Guidelines

Becoming an Aspirant to the Order of Interbeing (OI) and Ordination Process

Would I be eligible?

You would be eligible to express your aspiration if:

- you have received and been enjoying practising with the Five Mindfulness Trainings for at least one, but preferably two years.¹
- you have a solid personal practice and are able to describe that practice.
- are connected and practising with, a local sangha, and wider sangha and have the support of your local sangha to embark on the process of becoming an OI member.
- regularly participate in sangha retreats and community activities with harmony.
- you have a basic understanding of what an OI member is, and a view of how becoming an OI member will be helpful for you in your practice and helpful for the wider sangha.
- are able to articulate your aspiration for becoming an OI member and have expressed and received support for your aspiration to your family and friends.
- are willing and able to build, support, and be a resource for your sangha.

Process for Application

Becoming an Order of Interbeing member is a collective process.

1. Share with your local sangha your aspiration to explore becoming a member of the Order of Interbeing. Ask your sangha to support your aspiration. The aspirant must wait until the Sangha gets to know you and then, using its wisdom and Sangha Eyes, decides when you are ready and will invite you. Your local Sangha will then write letter supporting your aspiration. This letter needs to be from more than one person- sangha members as well as sangha leaders. The Lay Dharma Teacher Council (LDTC) also welcomes letters expressing concerns. Support letters must be current to that time of invitation, not ones written earlier.
2. Once you have received sangha support, reach out to a senior OI member or a Dharma Teacher to discuss your aspiration. That is, why do you want to become an OI member? How do you think becoming a member will help you in your practice? How will it help the sangha?

After that discussion:

3. Fill out the **Application to Become an Aspirant for the Order of Interbeing** form
4. Write a letter to the LDTC describing why you want to receive mentoring to become an OI member.
5. Copy your Sangha's letter of support.
6. Send both letters electronically to the Lay Dharma Teacher Council (see address below).
7. After consultation with the monastic DTs, the Lay Dharma Teacher Council has the final decision, by consensus, on whether an applicant will be accepted as an aspirant. The Lay DTC will inform the aspirant and their local sangha of the decision, in writing.

Mentoring

- OI mentors are suggested to the aspirant by the Lay DTC, in consultation with the aspirant.
- Once you have been allocated an OI mentor by the Lay DTC you will both decide how often to have contact and the form of your mentoring.
- **Preferred minimum time for mentoring is two years**, however many candidates take longer. It is a process of ripening and discernment of whether the path of an OI member feels right for you. This is a collective discernment between you, your OI mentor and the sangha.

¹ See Sr Chan Khong, *Guidelines for receiving the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings 2015*, in *Interbeing*, p111

² See Thich Nhat Hanh, *Joyfully Together*, pp85-87

- Each OI mentor will have a unique approach, but at a minimum during your mentoring you will be studying and reflecting on the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings of the Order of Interbeing; the Sutra on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness; the Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing and other teachings contained in Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh's book 'The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching'. It is also an essential component of mentoring that you read, study, and reflect on the Charter of the Order of Interbeing so that you can better understand the role, responsibility and obligations of an Order Member. The mentoring process includes Shining Light² sessions. These sessions give you feedback on the development of your skills and understandings and identify areas that need to be further developed. OI mentors are encouraged to ensure that their mentorship curriculum covers these basic topics.

Ordination

- Ordinations will be announced by the monastic community in advance, and the Dharma Teacher Council will inform all mentors.
- Your readiness for ordination will be proposed to the Lay Dharma Teacher Council by your mentor in consultation with you.
- If your mentor feels that you are ripe, then they will contact your local sangha to ask them for letters of support. Ripeness here means, at its core, that the mentor and you see that you have understood and are embodying the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings to some extent, are already engaged with the basic expectations of an Order member expressed in the Charter and have a lifegiving connection with your local sangha, and with the wider sangha.
- It's also important for the candidate to demonstrate, through their way of living, the quality of service, humility and the Four Spirits of the Order, as expressed in the Charter.
- Should support be expressed and received, you will be asked to fill out the OI Ordination Application form.
- The item called an "Ordination Package" needs to be sent to the monastic collecting the ordination packages AT LEAST 2 MONTHS before the upcoming ordination. They will then be reviewed for completeness and if complete, transmitted to the Ordination Council. The Package includes the Application for Ordination into the Order of Interbeing; the original and current aspiration letters for becoming an OI aspirant which are addressed to the International Dharma Teacher Council PV (not Thich Nhat Hanh or the Lay DTC); letter of initial support for mentorship by the aspirant's Sangha; mentor's letter of support for ordination; and Sangha's letter of support for ordination; and the aspirant's Five Mindfulness Trainings name, where received, and when.
- This Package needs to be sent to Plum Village at least 2 months before the ordination ceremony. This is because Dharma names are issued from Plum Village, not by monastics in Australia.
- You will be informed of the outcome.

Further information:

Nhat Hanh, Interbeing. Parallax Press: Berkeley.

Inquiries to: Lay Dharma Teacher Council. dtc.lay@pvaustralia.org

PLEASE KEEP THIS DOCUMENT SO THAT YOU CAN CONTINUE TO REFER TO IT.

This document was developed by the Australian Lay Dharma Teacher Council - Version 7 , April, 2025.
Additions by Br Phap Hai in consultation with the Charter of the OI and the book, Interbeing

¹ See Sr Chan Khong, *Guidelines for receiving the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings 2015*, in Interbeing, p111

² See Thich Nhat Hanh, Joyfully Together, pp85-87