

## **Dharma Ocean Staff/Instructor Dual Relationship Policy**

This Dual Relations Policy pertains to official Dharma Ocean events and retreats and to all staff, meditation instructors (“MIs”), teachers and other personnel (referred to also herein as “teachers,” “mentors,” and “MIs”) working to support the journey of participants within Dharma Ocean.

### **Protecting the Integrity of the Student’s Experience**

The view of this Policy is that, in keeping with our commitment as bodhisattvas on the Mahayana path, it is necessary we, as leaders and mentors within Dharma Ocean, protect, nurture and further the journey of the practitioners under our charge or responsibility. This is essential so that the personal journey of meditation and study can come to fruition within an environment of safety, trust and openness. We must be mindful of the necessity of educating teachers and students on the dangers of exploitation, which includes awareness of preventing situations where a student’s longing or openness toward the teachings and their own journey is jeopardized or diverted into intimate relationships with a teacher, mentor or staff person. Teachers, mentors and staff must not seek to fulfill their own social, emotional or sexual needs by taking advantage of a participant’s longing or vulnerability at a program or elsewhere in the mandala.

It is important to foster and protect the reputation not only of this lineage and organization as a safe community operating with integrity. But, even more, it is essential that program participants and community members recognize that the MIs, mentors, teachers, volunteers and staff of our community are expected to maintain personal integrity such that any attempts to use their positions to exploit or manipulate participants, students and/or mentees will not be tolerated. It is important to also understand that this Policy is intended to extend to all members of the community.

### **Definitions**

**Consensual Relationship:** A “consensual relationship” is an intimate, sexual and/or romantic relationship between two persons who voluntarily enter into such relationship.

**Personal Relationships:** “Personal relationship” shall mean marital or other committed relationships, significant familial relationships, significant others, intimate/emotional relationships and/or consensual sexual or romantic relationships.

**Participant/Student:** Anyone who attends an event or retreat, as well as members of Dharma Ocean. A participant’s primary purpose for attending an event or retreat is to attend to their personal journey. A participant may also be referred to as a “trainee” or “student.” A participant may have paid to be at the program or may have received a scholarship or may have made a work-exchange agreement to be there. A paying participant may at some point have

taken a paid staff position or work-exchange position during the same program, yet, to any staff member or teacher, their practical status remains the original, as a participant.

Employee or Program Staff: Anyone whose primary purpose for attending an event or retreat is to support the program container and/or support the journey of the Participant/Student. Program Staff are not limited to year-round employees but may also be part-time employees, program-only employees, media team members, coordinators, kitchen personnel, laundry/house cleaning personnel, practice coordinators and members of the Dorje Kasung.

Teachers and Meditation Instructors: Anyone, including Discussion Group Leaders, who serves in a leadership role related to mentorship, meditation instruction, spiritual guidance and group management. These people are regarded as holders of the teachings and spiritual guides.

Program Leadership: Any person who is a Teacher, Meditation Instructor, Employee, or Staff, as defined above.

### **Dual Relationships Prohibited**

The *initiation* of Dual Relationships between members of program leadership and participants/students is prohibited.

A dual relationship is defined as a therapeutic, business/financial, sexual or romantic relationship between a member of program leadership and a participant/student during an event or program.

Should a student involved in a Dharma Ocean program or event program approach a member of program leadership to begin a relationship, the member of program leadership shall not engage in the relationship until conclusion of the Waiting Period, as defined hereafter.

### **Waiting Period for Engaging a Personal Relationship**

If a member of leadership and a participant/student are interested in forming a personal relationship at an event or program, there is a minimum waiting period of ninety (90) days before they may enter into a personal intimate and/or sexual or romantic relationship. The waiting period begins at the end of the given event or program.

This waiting period is prescribed so that both parties may take time to integrate their personal experience of the retreat into their daily lives in a clear manner. Though the program may have ended, there could be a lingering (conscious or subconscious) status of authority or an uneven balance of power for some time. This state needs to be given some time to subside.

Nothing in this Policy shall be construed to abrogate the doctrine of employment-at-will, nor is it intended to confer an employment relationship on non-employees, such as volunteers or students.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND AGREEMENT**

I have read the above Dharma Ocean Staff/Instructor Dual Relations Policy and agree to the conditions and requirements stated therein. As a member of program leadership, I will not engage in an intimate personal and/or sexual or romantic relationship with a participant, as outlined in this Dual Relations Policy.

If I am unclear about the application of this Dual Relationship Policy at any point in time, I will immediately seek direct guidance from the lead kasung/kusung and the desung at the program or a senior teacher or the main teacher of the program and do so before engaging with a person of interest in any way.

I will also abide by the waiting period, set at a minimum of ninety (90) days from the conclusion of an event or program, before exploring a new relationship with a participant/student at this program.

Name (printed):

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Signature:

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Date:

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