



## GoShinKai Grading System Part 1

### Part 1. Notes for Teachers and Examiners

#### Teaching Syllabus and Grading Syllabus

Teaching and Grading Syllabuses provide **guidelines** for class teaching structure. GoShinKai is an open-minded association: Goshinkai encourages feedback from its Technical Committee, Fukushidoin and club instructors, who come from various Aikido backgrounds, to develop its teaching and grading activity in accordance with Hombu, Aikikai Japan and in the spirit of O Sensei Morihei Ueshiba and our British Sensei and mentor Mr William Smith M.B.E.

#### Regular Practice and Grading Preparation

*See 'Notes for Candidates'.*

Aikido practice is about lifelong development. The main vehicle for all practitioners' development is regular training at class: at every class repeating technique as uke and tori through full movement with various training partners. A candidate's readiness for grading should be a result of constant study and steadfast attendance at regular classes throughout the year. A regular Aikido class can contain participants of all levels and all ages. The challenge for the Aikido teacher is to teach and manage classes so that all participants can be progressed along their individual developmental paths whether they are grading or not. Preparation for imminent gradings should be kept in this context.

#### Considerations for Weapons Syllabus

Our reasons for studying weapons and including them in the grading syllabus:

- Knowledge of provenance of Aikido techniques.
- For Aikido skills and understanding: our practise with weapons should be seen to translate into better tai sabaki, zanshin, adaptation of ma-ai, kokyu (extension) and better 'blending' in unarmed techniques.

#### Considerations for 6<sup>th</sup> Kyu

Given that Hombu Kyu gradings start at 5 Kyu, we should view 6 kyu requirements in perspective and keep the 6 Kyu syllabus simple, still **upholding a high standard** but with fewer requirements and with shorter qualification period. The advantages of this are:

- A minimum of 36 hours practice from joining means that a student training twice per week at 1.5 hours per class could grade after 12 weeks (24 days' training). This is an achievable goal for e.g. a university student who may be away out of term and who may not be able to train during exams.
- Fewer techniques to learn: **we can concentrate on quality of form and understanding rather than quantity** to build a firm foundation for the beginners' future development. Doshu Moriteru Ueshiba, writes in *Progressive Aikido* (2005):

*"In Aikido training, the first things we learn are hanmi stance, irimi, tenkan and how to develop kokyu power. In all these Aikido techniques the most important and fundamental element is proper movement "* and *"the special characteristic of Aikido: all direct confrontation with an attacking force is avoided"*.

Thus it would be good to focus on preparing our 6 Kyu candidates to demonstrate:

- Good posture, good solo tai sabaki, good finishing posture and competent basic forward and backward rolls.
- Whether tori or uke, a basic understanding of blending in their body movement: not using strength when performing technique, not blocking movement when receiving.
- Ability to perform the required techniques and exercises without hesitation – demonstrating good knowledge (given that they do not have too many different techniques to remember).



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- Fewer techniques to learn: the sooner the student can be got ready for grading. The sooner we can reward the student with a grade, the greater the motivation for the student to keep going, potentially reducing membership attrition.
- Graded students can make more confident and committed club leaders of a university students' union club (president, treasurer etc) and hopefully inspire more new students to practice Aikido.
- Though there are no techniques here involving forward roll, it is important that at 6 kyu standard the students should demonstrate competent basic ukemi, both forward and backward, so that they are able to receive all the normal basic techniques done in class through to projection.

### **Selection of Techniques for a Grading Examination**

Is at the discretion of the examiner. We would regard as key, basic, "essential" techniques those which are listed on the Hombu grading system. In addition to these, the examiner may select in accordance with what the teachers have been working on in class and recent courses.

### **Duration of grading**

Is at the discretion of the examiner. Circumstances should be taken into account. These include: the nature of event (a regular club class or a special course?); other students attending the class/course and their needs; availability of suitable ukes; mitigating circumstances for individual candidates, such as age, medical status, disability. A long grading may test a candidate's spirit and technique but may not be practical or appropriate in the given circumstances. Long gradings may deter club members from attending classes at which gradings are to take place.

### **Continuous assessment**

Due to practical limitations on grading examination duration, the examiners and club instructors should give consideration to methods of continuous assessment such as mock gradings, calling up prospective candidates as ukes for teaching demonstrations, observation during regular class of candidate's jiyuwaza, etc.

### **The Grading Examination**

*See 'Notes for Candidates'*

- Each candidate, in the spirit of equal opportunities, is given the best chance of passing.
- The examiner provides clear commands and directions. A clear delineation is made between each change of technique so there is no confusion. Uke may be changed every few minutes, if necessary. Senior grade uke should be reserved for the senior grade candidates. As a rule partners in an examination should be of the same rank.
- In the event of any misunderstanding or error on the part of the candidate, the examiner will stop the candidate and correct what s/he is doing.
- The examining panel should give its full attention to the candidates, in respect for their giving of their best. There should be no distraction of mind, e.g. discussion, shaking head, etc.

### **Health & Safety: Test Risk Assessment** *in preparation*

GSK maintains a risk assessment for Kyu and Dan gradings which takes into consideration: any injury, medical condition, pregnancy, age (child / over 50) of candidates and ukes; briefing of ukes taking part in grading; briefing of candidate; adequate preparation of the candidate for the rigours of the grading in terms of fitness to cope with the pace of the grading, etc.