



## *GoShinKai Grading System Part 2*

### **2. Notes for Candidates**

#### **Aikido Practice and the Grading System**

We practise Aikido in the spirit of its Founder, O Sensei Morihei Ueshiba. Aikido is more than a technical martial practice: it encompasses a spiritual aspect and a philosophy that needs to be expressed and encouraged in students.

The grading system has importance in that it provides a structure to and recognition of an individual student's development in Aikido. The system helps to ensure that training standards and technical correctness are upheld and that Aikido is passed on in its traditional form. However, gradings should be viewed in a proper perspective: as a teaching tool and training benchmark and not as the reason for training.

Aikido students should have a commitment to regular practice, training steadfastly throughout the year and not just when they feel that it is about time that they should be graded. This commitment should be extended to your Club: to support your fellow practitioners and teachers – the people upon whom you rely to help you achieve your own Aikido goals. So if you wish to be deserving of permission to grade at your Club, you will gladly support other students who are preparing for gradings at different times to yourself, whatever their level. The form of this support includes attendance at class throughout the year, doing your best to practise with flowing movement and blending with (not blocking) your practice partner, attending any mock gradings and the grading itself, either as observers/supporters or, if at a suitable grade, taking part in the examinations as uke.

Kyu grading examinations may be held at your Club several times per year, depending on members' readiness. Dan grading examinations take place at the GSK Spring and Autumn courses.

#### **Club Grading Applications**

- Students who are considering applying for a grading should discuss their preparations in good time with the Head of Dojo. Your Head of Dojo will agree with you a suitable grading date, taking into account the amount of preparation needed to bring you up to the standard appropriate to the grade.
- Permission to grade is given in writing by your Head of Dojo. The examiner should be confident that the prospective candidate is of the required standard. An examiner has the right to refuse permission for a grading on reasonable grounds, e.g. insufficient training, incorrect attitude etc.
- The candidate should undergo more intensive training in the period before the test. At higher kyu level, this preparation period should be of the order of 2-3 months.
- The candidate should have attended the previous Club grading and, if of a suitable grade at the time, taken part as uke. A Dan grading candidate should likewise have participated in the previous GSK Dan grading examination at the most recent Spring or Autumn course.
- Be sure you have the required number of practice days before applying for an examination. The prerequisite time between gradings (Part 5) is a minimum based on regular training.
- GSK membership and insurance must be valid at all times. Make sure your GSK membership book contains your details with BAB insurance slip and photo affixed. Yudansha, make sure your photo is affixed in your yudansha book.
- It is your responsibility that all your paperwork is in perfect order in time before the examination.



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- Kyu grade application forms and GSK books should be handed in to the Head of Dojo 2 weeks before the examination.
- Dan grades: Application forms, GSK and yudansha books plus essay should be sent to your instructor and the Chair of the Technical Committee 4 weeks before the examination (in time for the preceding Technical Committee meeting).
- Kyu examinations shall be taken at the dojo where you normally practice. The examiner will be a GSK Shido-in or Fukushido-in, normally your instructor. If you wish to take the test at a dojo other than where you normally practice, approval of both dojos is required.
- Dan examinations shall normally be taken at the GSK Spring and Autumn courses in front of an examination panel of GSK Shido-in. Under exceptional circumstances, with the consent of the GSK Principal, the examination may take place at the dojo where you normally practice.

### The Grading Examination

- Potential fitness, age, disabilities and injuries are taken into account to ensure all students are given equal opportunity to develop and progress.
- Be assured that the examiner is not looking for opportunities to fail any candidate. In the event of a decision not to pass, the examiner and instructor will have a meeting with the candidate to explain the decision and to set out guidelines to prepare the candidate for a retake.
- Ensure your keikogi is in good order.
- Candidates for Dan grading must have tanto, bokken and jo ready. Correct weapons etiquette must be observed: never throw a weapon down – place it carefully on the mat for uke to pick up when you (tori) are ready.
- Listen carefully to the examiner and demonstrate the required techniques at a measured pace, correctly, showing that you understand the principles of Aikido.
- If you do not hear or understand an instruction, ask the examiner to repeat it. In the event of a misunderstanding or error on your part, the examiner will stop and correct what you are doing.
- Repeat a given technique, left and right, ura and omote, until the examiner tells you to stop.
- Full commitment and attention is expected from you throughout the test. There should be no distraction such as show of emotion, e.g. shaking of the head at bad technique, frivolity, etc.
- Always be aware of activity going on around you. Do not be so immersed in your own activity that you endanger others.

### Grading Etiquette

1. At the start of the examination session, all candidates, ukes and observers line up in seiza facing the Grading Committee.
2. The grade being taken will be announced.
3. When your name is announced stand up and answer “Hai Sensei”
4. Move, in shikko, to the centre of the mat or next to the candidate called out before you.
5. When all candidates are lined up and ukes have been designated (i) all bow to kamiza; (ii) bow to Grading Committee; (iii) bow to your partner. At the end of the grading candidates and ukes line up again in the centre of the mat and the same sequence of bowing is carried out.
6. Results may be announced at the end of the class or at the end of the course. All will be lined up as in No. 1. When your name is called, stand up and remain where you are.
7. The result of the grading will be announced: “pass” or “take it again”. In either case you will receive a round of applause for your effort. Bow and resume seiza.



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8. After a grading, whatever the result, it is good manners to thank your instructor(s) for their teaching.
- If your result is “take it again”, do not be discouraged. Show positive attitude, train regularly and work hard in accordance with the advice given by the examiner. Your instructor will help you - listen to your teacher.
  - If you have just passed **Shodan – this is only the beginning!**  
As a Dan grade you are expected to set a good example both in technique and in attitude. **Do not forget what you have been taught** and always keep an **open mind** to absorb different aspects of Aikido which are new to you. **Aikido development is lifelong.**