

Community Engagement and Social Responsibility Policy 2025

Preamble:

Dharma Gate Buddhist College (hereinafter: the College) is committed to social responsibility, community engagement, sustainable development, compassionate action, and community service grounded in Buddhist values, as well as to community participation. The purpose of this Policy is to set out the framework and guidelines for the College's social responsibility and community relations activities, and to provide guidance for organizing its community engagement initiatives, in alignment with Buddhist values, the Dharma Gate Buddhist Church, and the College's educational mission.

1. § Principles for interpreting and applying the Policy:

The College's social responsibility and community engagement are guided by the following principles:

- 1) Compassion and ethical responsibility: Guided by Buddhist teachings, the College's activities are shaped by respect for all living beings, non-violence, and ethical conduct.
- 2) Sustainability: The College is committed to environmental, economic, and social sustainability in its operations.
- 3) Community-centred approach: The College gives priority to, and emphasises, the active involvement of local and wider communities in the life of the College to foster shared reflection.
- 4) Participatory approach and openness: The College strives, across all areas of its operations, to integrate diverse perspectives and to respect the views of stakeholders.

2. § Laws applicable to this Policy:

Dharma Gate Buddhist College carries out its community engagement activities and social responsibility in accordance with Hungarian and European Union legislation, its internal policies, and Buddhist ethical principles. This Policy on community participation and social responsibility is aligned in particular with the following standards:

- 1) Act CCIV of 2011 on National Higher Education, in particular its sections on social responsibility, student participation, and service-oriented higher education.
- 2) Act CCVI of 2011 on Freedom of Conscience and Religion, and on Churches, Denominations and Religious Communities, with particular regard to the community-building and religious services of ecclesiastical institutions.
- 3) Act LXXXVIII of 2005 on Public Interest Volunteer Activities, which sets the legal framework for community service by students and instructors.
- 4) The applicable legislation on public education and adult education, insofar as the College's community engagement involves educational programmes.
- 5) Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR) on the protection of personal data, as well as Act CXII of 2011 on the Right of Informational Self-Determination and Freedom of Information, wherever personal data are processed in the course of community projects.
- 6) Legislation concerning environmental sustainability and the National Framework Strategy on Sustainable Development.
- 7) European Union guidance on social responsibility, particularly the integration of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into education.

3. § This Policy is also aligned with the following internal policies and ethical frameworks:

- 1) The College's Code of Ethics
- 2) The College's Educational and Study Regulations

- 3) The College's Research Regulations
- 4) The College's Quality Management Manual

4. § Ecclesiastical and Buddhist principles that define the moral framework for social responsibility and community engagement:

- 1) The Statutes of the Dharma Gate Buddhist Church (hereinafter: the Church), with particular regard to the Church's social, educational, and religious services.
- 2) The Buddhist ethical principles (e.g., the Five Precepts, the principle of non-harming, compassion, interdependence).
- 3) The autonomy of Buddhist communities, as well as the alignment of religious practice and education with Hungarian law.

5. § The College's objectives at the institutional level:

- 1) **Mission and role:** As a higher education institution, the College delivers Buddhist education, conducts research, and fosters the development of Buddhist communities. Within its role in Hungary and Europe, it presents itself as a democratic alternative grounded in Buddhist culture and worldview, and in an understanding of the human being and society. To this end, the College conducts active outreach and public education. The College advances its mission by researching Buddhist traditions and contemporary community practices; sharing academic and mission-driven scholarship; delivering transformative, learning-outcomes-based programmes; and developing spiritual services. The College has set out the rules governing these activities, along with its programme-related responsibilities, in its relevant internal policies.
- 2) **Philosophy:** In response to the challenges of the 21st century, the College's philosophy embodies the Buddhist path of morality (sila), mindfulness (samadhi), and the cultivation of wisdom (panna). Its aim is to foster a sustainable way of life within the academic community and its surrounding ecosystem. It fulfils this goal both through its organised educational programmes and by making the transmission of philosophical values accessible to the wider public via open-to-all events and its Open Day.
- 3) **Partnership:** Together with its maintaining body, the Church, the College sets shared objectives and jointly develops and funds community engagement programmes for the wider public. In particular, it delivers these activities by: organising Open Days; facilitating participation in Buddhist ceremonies; and offering open meditation programmes.

The College partners with the Church in shaping its community policy. The College leadership collaborates in shaping the Church's excellence objectives, aligning community and social activities with the Church's aims. Both the Church and the College endorse and embody the responsible action promoted by global Buddhism, centred on peace, nourishment, healing, support, and harmony with the environment. The College and the Church fundamentally embrace the Middle Way, avoiding extremes and seeking to focus on local social objectives.

- 4) **Scope and directions of the partnership:** The College and the Church regard the following, in particular, as the internal supporting structures of community development:
 - Organising community events, retreats, and ceremonies,
 - Providing meditation spaces,
 - Operating an online adult education system,
 - Maintaining internal and external information and communication channels,
 - Organising international mobility programmes.

The College and the Church define, in particular but not exclusively, the following levels of community engagement:

- Institutional academic community,
- Relations with the maintaining Church and Hungarian Buddhist communities,
- Network partnerships with domestic ecclesiastical and other higher education institutions,
- Partnerships with Erasmus and Erasmus Mundus, and with Asian and global Buddhist higher education networks,
- Relations with European and global Buddhist organisations.

The Church and the College regard the following, in particular, as community engagement activities related to social responsibility:

- Organising interfaith dialogue,
- Continuing professional development for Buddhist ecclesiastical instructors, and religious education teacher training,
- Developing religious services, standard-setting,
- Developing programmes to address poverty, hunger, illness, end-of-life care, residential care, and prison programmes,
- Organising spiritual programmes: Dharma teachings and retreats,
- Contributing to Buddhist urban-planning objectives: green spaces, meditation gardens.

6. § Organisational units of the College that organise community engagement initiatives:

1) Rector:

Responsible for global higher education and ecclesiastical relations, and for coordinating activities carried out within the framework of international and domestic partnerships. Directs and supervises the planning, delivery, and evaluation of the College's outreach, educational, and practice programmes, which are open to all.

2) Vice-Rector(s):

The Vice-Rector(s) oversee education, research, and community service. The Vice-Rector(s) contribute to the implementation and organisation of programmes that reach a broad cross-section of society, and each year propose opportunities for organising initiatives to present Buddhist philosophy.

It is also the responsibility of the Vice-Rector(s) to propose to the Rector the initiation of mobility programmes and collaborations that strengthen international partnerships.

3) Instructors and Students:

To realise the Buddhist principles of community service, both instructors and students may take part, on a voluntary basis, in the delivery of community programmes organised by the Church and the College.

4) Continuing education programmes:

The College reviews the structure of its programmes annually and seeks opportunities to transmit Buddhist values and practices beyond the formal educational framework. The College regularly (at least once a year) holds community development training sessions for its employees and students.

5) In addition to the above, the College organises community events and retreats several times a year, and provides meditation spaces.

7. § In its community engagement, the College regards the following as key areas for planning community programmes:

- 1) In the field of education and training: Lifestyle counselling and community development, Master's programme in Community Leadership, Buddhist Chaplaincy Programme, specialised and adult education programmes.
- 2) In the field of student engagement: Service in religious communities, counselling practice with individuals, groups and communities, social care practice within chaplaincy services.
- 3) In the area of research-related societal engagement: Citizen science, TDK and master's-level research through community projects, library and database development, action research, publications.
- 4) In the field of social responsibility and community development: Interfaith dialogue, In-service training for Buddhist ecclesiastical instructors, religious education teacher training, Development of services for religious communities, Social services, integration of Buddhist principles into urban planning.

8. § Planning and approval procedure

- 1) To implement the planned programmes, the College operates an annual planning cycle. The annual planning cycle is aligned with the academic calendar.
- 2) During the planning phase, the College identifies the needs of religious, civil society, and local communities to shape the community development programmes for the given academic year, and sets priorities accordingly. On the basis of these priorities, the College plans and implements the community development programmes for the given academic year.
- 3) During the planning phase, the College specifically identifies the programmes it intends to deliver as open, community, or off-site programmes.
- 4) The Vice-Rector(s) prepare the programme proposal (programme plan) for the given year, which they submit to the Rector. The submission must include the following:
 - the designation and listing of the target groups for the community engagement programmes defined for the given academic year, together with the identified needs,
 - the specification of the types of activities intended to achieve community engagement,
 - a chronological list of the planned programmes for the year, indicating their duration and grouping them by activity type,
 - for each programme, the identification of the participants and the persons responsible who are involved in its organisation and implementation,
 - the mode of delivery of the programme: open, off-site, on-campus,
 - the preliminary cost estimate for delivering the programme,
 - the anticipated impact and outcomes of the programme.
- 5) The submitted programme plan may be implemented only after approval by the Rector. After the close of the academic year, the Rector reports to the Senate and the Church on the results and content of the programmes aimed at implementing community engagement, and summarises the community development objectives achieved in that year.
- 6) The Rector ensures the quality management of community development programmes, in particular that their evaluation is carried out in line with the PDCA cycle, in accordance with the table set out in the annex to this Policy.

9. § Extension of the academic calendar

The College aims to integrate community development programmes as fully as possible into the academic calendar, providing students with opportunities to participate in community engagement programmes. The College strives to align the planning and organisation of community development programmes with its research planning activities.

10. § Student participation and recognition

- 1) If students also participate in the implementation or organisation of a programme, for them, with respect to their service activity
 - certificates
 - certificates of recognition
 - credit recognitions
 - may be awarded
- 2) Student participation in a given community programme may be subject to prior registration. Student participation in any part of the programme may also be subject to additional documentation, e.g., preparing a report or maintaining a mentoring log.
- 3) Student feedback must be taken into account to improve community programmes.

11. § Instructor participation and recognition

- 1) Instructors' community activities may be included in their annual performance evaluation; if so, they will be informed in advance.
- 2) Instructors have the opportunity to propose community development programmes to the Vice-Rector(s), lead them, author publications in the field, and contribute to the development of innovations in community programmes.

12. § Documentation and monitoring

- 1) All community engagement activities must be registered in advance in the College's community database. Data on participants and on the event or program — demonstrating the programme's impact and effectiveness—must be documented.
- 2) All programmes delivered must be evaluated in line with the PDCA cycle, as set out in the annex to this Policy.

13. § Complaints-handling and ethical considerations

Issues arising during community programmes are governed by the provisions set out in the Code of Ethics and the Complaints-Handling Policy. All participants must, throughout their involvement, respect the College's ethical standards and the principles of religious pluralism and human dignity.

14. § Quality management perspectives on community engagement (in line with the PDCA cycle)

The College carries out the quality management of community engagement in accordance with the principles of the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle. The table below summarises the main areas, perspectives, forms of documentation, and evaluation methods:

community development	Viewpoint	Documents	Performance measurement
Buddhist path	Research on Buddhist community development	Study	Stakeholder feedback
Community development leadership		Programme/strategy	Action implementation
Community development system	Multi-level system	Organisational membership, annual programme	Engagement, impact
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Health, inclusion, education	Curriculum, studies	Voluntary service
Strategic partnerships	By level	Contracts	Annual activity
Faith in Action Project	Religious literacy	programme plan	Dialogue programmes
Networking	Teaching-focused universities	Completed programs	Feedback
Development levels	Individuals-macro level	Counselling, projects	Implementation
credit recognition	Voluntary work	Curriculum, course mapping	course completion
talent development	TDK, special college	Hidden curriculum	Mapping to a course
Development projects	Service and research	Project description	Project evaluation
Performance recognition	Allocation of responsibilities	Annual report	Impact assessment
Community development evaluation	Research evaluation	Report	Submission

15. § Closing provisions

This Policy shall enter into force on 10 July 2025, pursuant to Senate Resolution No. 32/2025 (07.10).

Budapest, 10 July 2025

Gábor Karsai rector