



VISION BOARD CHARTER

The role of the Vision Board is to ensure that the Rigpa community has clear spiritual guidance and direction.

Background

Following the retirement of Sogyal Rinpoche as Spiritual Director of Rigpa in December 2017, the responsibility for the spiritual guidance of Rigpa was handed over to a group of his trusted students. These students were chosen on the basis of their Dharma knowledge, experience in Dharma practice, and dedication to serving the lineage and the sangha. The group was named the 'Vision Board'.

Rigpa's vision

We understand Rigpa's vision to be making available the authentic teachings of Buddhism in a way that is accessible to the modern world. In particular, Rigpa upholds the authentic lineages of the Nyingma (Ancient Transmission) tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, which offers a complete, graduated path to enlightenment. Rigpa was founded by Sogyal Rinpoche and its vision is further detailed in Rigpa's Vision Statement.

Motivation

We are motivated by Bodhichitta and our commitment and faith in the Buddha's teachings and the lineage of masters who have transmitted this wisdom through the generations. Our heartfelt wish is to share the benefit of these teachings with as many people as possible.

Role and activities

The Vision Board is responsible for safeguarding the spiritual authenticity of Rigpa, helping ensure all its activities remain true to its spiritual vision, values and culture. We do this by gathering the spiritual guidance of the Buddhist teachers advising Rigpa, working collaboratively with the rest of the organization, and listening closely to the sangha.

It is also responsible for ensuring that Rigpa secures Sogyal Rinpoche's legacy, including his vision, teachings, lineage holders and particular approach to dharma activity.

The activities of the Vision Board include:

- Ensuring Rigpa has a clear spiritual direction, vision and mission based on the 40 years of instructions from Sogyal Rinpoche, and the guidance of Rigpa's spiritual advisors;
- Clarifying Rigpa's values and culture;
- Working closely with the Boards of all Rigpa entities who also are guardians of Rigpa's vision, mission and values;
- Consulting all the teams and the sangha on these matters and inviting new ideas;
- Advising where questions arise on whether an activity is aligned with Rigpa's vision, mission, and values, and supporting conflict resolution;
- Being available to the sangha at retreats, events and online to hear them and communicate about the spiritual direction of Rigpa.

Vision Board members

The Vision Board is periodically renewed so that other Rigpa students may have the opportunity to serve Rigpa's vision, the sangha and public in this way. We especially focus on training and mentoring new board members to ensure continuity into the future.

The following terms are established:

- The Vision Board varies in size from 7 to 11 members.
- The Vision Board is accountable to Rigpa's Spiritual Advisors, and they oversee the renewal of the Board.
- The Vision Board is renewed every 4 years.
- A board member may retire from their role at any time, giving six-month notice to allow for a replacement to be found and a period of handover.
- No more than one-third of the board may be renewed at any one time.
- A Vision Board member may be dismissed for a breach of conduct, continued absenteeism, or other such serious reason, by unanimous vote of all other board members.
- Vision Board members aim not to combine their role with management or governance positions in national Rigpas, except in exceptional circumstances discussed with the international board and our spiritual advisors.

- Vision Board members need to allow for 4 hours per week to be able to fulfill their responsibilities.
- The general principle is that the vision board activities are voluntary. Travel and accommodation expenses for meetings are compensated. There can be some time compensation in exceptional circumstances.
- All members participate in the running of the Vision Board.

These terms of reference and the Charter may be reviewed periodically by the Vision Board.

Process of nomination of new Vision Board members

New members of the Vision Board are nominated for their life-long commitment to the dharma and to the vision of Rigpa, for their knowledge of our lineage and for their qualities of Bodhichitta.

They are nominated by and from the following groups:

- Teachers and practice holders
- Senior activity holders, meaning they have held a role of responsibility in a local, national or international team for over ten years.
- Two places are also offered to members of Rigpa's youth group, Rigpé Shyonnu to join the Vision Board as Youth Advisors.

At least half of the vision board is formed of Senior Teachers and Practice Holders.

The Vision Board ensures that its members represent all the main areas of knowledge of our lineage and tradition - teachings, study, practice and activity. It also makes sure that as far as possible our international community is well represented in terms of age, gender and nationalities.

Final approval of the nominations therefore rests with the Vision Board and the Rigpa Boards coming to a consensus agreement, with the guidance of Rigpa's Spiritual Advisors.

Meetings

The Vision Board commits to meeting in person at least twice a year. We all aim as far as possible to attend these meetings in person, and the quorum is full attendance but there can be exceptional circumstances where it is necessary to meet even though not all members can participate.

For online meetings the rest of the year, the quorum for a meeting is half of the members.

We take decisions by consensus agreement, not by vote.

When a consensus cannot be reached, we examine what the causes of the disagreement are and take the time and space needed to reach a consensus. We aim to find an agreement that best serves the vision and greater good of the Rigpa community, and that everyone can accept, even if it does not fully reflect our personal point of view. We will use best practice methods for reaching consensus.

Governance and transparency

The Vision Board is included in the governance structure that unites the Rigpa entities worldwide.

We commit to applying best practice when it comes to transparency in decision-making.

Ethics

At all times, we strive to apply and integrate Buddhist view, methods and ethics in our work.

In particular, we commit to upholding the Rigpa Code of Conduct, and the Shared Values and Guidelines of the Rigpa Community, and to advocating the culture of ethics of the Rigpa organization.

We ensure that all Vision Board members are aware of their obligation to disclose any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest that they may have. And we commit to discussing and managing those conflicts.

Equality

All members of the board are equal; there is no hierarchy related to role or seniority of years.

We are committed to listening to each other and to hearing and respecting our different points of view.

We encourage open debate and airing of differences.

We do not discriminate on any basis, including gender, race or age.

Openness

We recognize and respect the diversity of views and wishes within our sangha. We make an active effort to listen to, understand and appreciate everyone.

We commit to being accessible to the sangha and the public that we serve. In particular, we make every effort to attend the main national Rigpa programmes.

As a Vision Board, individually and collectively, we are open to change, new ideas and to a continuous process of learning and development.

Consultation

We understand the vital importance of consultation on matters of spiritual significance to Rigpa.

We foster connections to the wider Buddhist world and are in touch with topics and developments that have an important bearing on the integration of Buddhism in the West.

Any member of the Rigpa sangha may contact the Vision Board through the dedicated email address vision.board@rigpa.org.

Team work

We communicate with each other frequently and share our plans well in advance.

We communicate key outcomes of our meetings and share the advice we receive through live presentations and written communications.

We address ourselves to the Rigpa community and the public in a unified voice. When a Vision Board member expresses a personal point of view, this is clearly represented as such and not the opinion of the Board as a whole.

Mutual support

We are committed to supporting each other on our Dharma path and in our Dharma work.

We help each other to ensure a positive balance between our Dharma work and service, and our path of study and practice. We model a culture where we can take annual leave of 1-3 months for retreat or to receive teachings and transmissions.

Contact

vision.board@rigpa.org