

Kwanmukan High Dan Ranking

Guidelines and Procedures

The Kwanmukan Foundation (KMK) has determined that all Dan ranking of 5th Dan and above will be organizational ranks. This means that high Dan ranking decisions will be made by the organization. The Shihan Council has been granted the authority to certify rank by the bylaws and Constitution. Since the passing of Hanshi and founder Grand Master George Anderson, the KMK has become more of a collaborative decision making organization. The policies and procedures here formulated are to serve as guidelines when high rank decisions are being made.

Past policies/procedures

The past method for granting high-Dan rank was loosely defined. There were basically only two criteria emphasized—time-in-grade and Shihan recommendation. While minimum age relative to rank was also a determinant, it rarely needed to be applied.

In recent years, we have seen a gradual decrease in time-in-grade as a determinant for high-dan ranking, and more emphasis on Shihan (teacher) recommendation. This has led to a sense of unfairness amongst some KMK members, as some eligible for high-Dan rank are moved ahead of others with similar qualifications, predominantly based on Shihan recommendation. Complicating this issue is the fact that many candidates for higher rank do not self-advocate, choosing instead to wait for their Shihan to recommend advancement. This sometimes results in worthy candidates being delayed in receiving higher Dan grade. In the end, we all desire that our senior Dans are worthy of the consideration and that they will represent the KMK well, especially in the area of technical expertise.

Some issues to consider

The current state of affairs is clouded by the Pandemic of recent years. Alongside that externality, there are some ongoing trends and issues that should be brought to light.

- **Root causes**

- It is recognized that there is not a nefarious motivation of individual teachers to put their students into higher ranks.
- As time passes, things change and the KMK must discern how those changes may impact the sustainability of the organization.
- An emphasis on continuing education and individual growth is the desired end for all KMK members, high-Dans, lower-Dans and kyu ranks.

- **Aging problem**

- The original inner circle is aging. This must be acknowledged and understood, especially as it relates to technical aspects of the KMK (the purview of the Shihan Council).
- We must ensure that newer high-Dan KMK members are prepared, both technically and otherwise, for their future leadership roles.
- We must do all we can to create a culture that makes it easy for future leaders to enjoy a productive and meaningful working relationship with all members of the KMK, but especially their peer group.
- We need to be aware of generational changes as a new group of leaders emerges; this, in part, means more group- and peer-based decision making.

- **Past and futures**

- Hanshi Anderson often referred to the need to 'work the system.' As the organization grows and adapts to new leadership, a deep understanding of the system is imperative.
- The recent teacher training conducted by Hanshi Patrick Hickey in the first half of 2021 demonstrates one way to ensure the 'system' is passed on.

- The KMK 'system' is integrated and related and well documented. Many of the things that serve to connect various aspects of the KMK emerge for the individual over time, as one's training in the martial arts progresses.
- It is necessary that ranking be viewed as an objective activity as much as is possible. This means the criteria for achieving high Dan ranking must be clearly articulated, understandable, fair and adaptable to unusual circumstances.
- Given that rigid policies and procedures can sometimes prove to be dogmatic and ultimately detrimental, any structure must accommodate as many possible eccentricities as possible; a structure for accelerated high-Dan promotions is included herein.

The Shihan Council

The Shihan Council is granted the authority to determine all organizational ranking of 5th Dan and above, including review of the candidate. While this is not new, sometimes ranks are granted without adequate review of the candidate and acknowledgement of the candidates personal interests or circumstance. To help the members of the Shihan Council fairly and adequately evaluate a candidate's promotion, and to ensure candidates view the process as fair and equitable, the following structure is recommended.

The Four Functions of High-Dan (5th and higher) Promotion

1. The Curriculum Development Function
2. The Education and Training Function
3. The Evaluation Function
4. The Certification Function

All functions will be temporary committees whose membership will change as conditions dictate, except for the final decision-making and certification, which is the purview of the Shihan Council. There are adequate checks and balances in the process to ensure the process is fair and equal.

Curriculum Development

This committee will be tasked with designing an individual-specific curriculum for a high-Dan candidate. It is assumed that if an individual has reached the level of 4th-Dan, they know the system well enough so that future education can be individualized. The curriculum committee, working in concert with the candidate, will design a program to help the candidate achieve her/his desired goals, while at the same time ensuring adherence to core KMK principles and concepts. Once established, this education plan will guide the candidates training activities until the time of their promotion. This does not mean the candidate cannot continue to train as they have up to this point, just that the new plan will help the candidate achieve her/his desired aims. The plan created by this committee is to be known as a Continuing Education (CE) plan.

Education and Training

This committee will also be set up individually for each candidate. Members of this group will be selected based on their expertise, experience and knowledge as it relates to the plan developed by the curriculum committee. Sometimes it may be necessary to utilize resources that may include outside parties, e.g. if the candidate wants to pursue coaching, special needs, teaching, etc. While the KMK is vast in experience, sometimes we may have to draw on affiliated experts to help a candidate achieve their goals. This committee will gather and provide the resources necessary and be actively involved in the training necessary for the candidate to achieve the goals set out in the CE plan.

Evaluation

The evaluation committee will monitor a candidates progress as it relates to the CE plan on an ongoing basis. If necessary, working with the candidate and the curriculum and education and training committees, this committee may suggest to alter or evolve the CE plan as required. Typically, it is envisioned that this could include additional study areas that may help the candidate. It will be necessary for this group to remain in close contact with the candidate to gauge progress and ultimately to recommend the candidate to the certification committee for rank.

Certification

Once the evaluation committee believes the candidate has achieved the stated goals of the CE plan and has met all other requirements, it will forward its recommendation to the certification committee. This group will make sure the candidate has met all criteria (up to date membership, prior rank history, background checks, sexual harassment education, conflict of interest education, et al). Ultimately, the certification committee will hand off its recommendation to the Shihan Council, who will then make the final certification decision.

Separation of Powers

Much of this process is designed to expose the candidate to the KMK, writ large. It is intended to grant the candidate the opportunity to work with many members of the KMK to amplify the experiences he/she has had to date. It is not intended to strip the candidate's Shihan of authority, but instead to augment his/her teachings. To ensure fairness, the relationships of the four functions must have some independence, while at the same time a collaborative working relationship. Therefore:

- Curriculum committee members may be part of the Education/Training committee.
- Evaluation committee members may NOT be members of the Education/Training committee or Curriculum committee.
- Certification committee members may NOT be members of either the Education/Training or Evaluation committees.
- Each candidate will have an individualized program.
- Each committee will be specific to an individual candidate.
- Education/Training committee members cannot evaluate or certify.
- Evaluation committee members cannot train or certify.

The CE Plan

The candidate will have input into their CE plan. Depending on the candidate's desire, the curriculum committee will attempt to design a plan that best serves the candidate's aims and

the aims of the KMK. In designing a CE plan, the curriculum committee may seek assistance from others in the KMK, including the candidate's Shihan/teacher. A candidate's Shihan/teacher may be part of the candidate's Education/Training committee (subject to restrictions outlined elsewhere). As stated elsewhere, changes to the CE plan may be suggested by other committees.

- The CE plan is specific to a certain candidate.
- The CE plan should meet the educational focus and areas of specialization of the candidate.
- The CE plan will adhere to generally accepted martial arts principles.
- The curriculum committee may consider resources from outside the KMK, and if appropriate, outside the martial arts universe, e.g. an individual may utilize course offered by the USANKF, the USAKF or the AAU for coaching, or may use a course not specific to the martial arts, such as for first-aid or physiology.

Certification

As part of its recommendation to the Shihan Council, the certification committee will prepare a brief report that includes the candidate's full martial arts history, the CE plan, membership status, and status of all other requirements (see appendices to this document).

Exceptions to High-Dan Ranking Guidelines

Sometimes it may be advisable to promote an individual before they have reached the time-in-grade standard or may not have met all the criteria for advancement.

- An individual may be an exceptional learner.
- It might be helpful to the organization for a person to advance more rapidly or be temporarily advanced for a specific purpose.
- A member might be facing some kind of life event, such as illness.

Process for exceptions:

- The candidate will first approach his teacher and/or the Shihan Council (SC) with the request;

- The Shihan Council will consider the request and contact the individual's teacher, if any, and others knowledgeable about the candidate.
- Upon recommendation of the Shihan Council, the Curriculum Committee will include the special consideration in the development of the Continuing Education plan and the SC will approve.
- From this point forward, the process will be the same as the normal high-Dan ranking process.

Some other considerations in the case of exceptions:

- Does the candidate routinely show up at KMK-sponsored events?
- Does the candidate take the appropriate courses and act as a referee in KMK-sponsored karate or jiu-jitsu tournaments?
- Does the candidate work at tournaments in official or volunteer capacities (refereeing, administration, table help, setup/teardown)?
- Does the candidate contribute to the organization beyond their personal training regimen?
- Does the candidate train outside of the KMK in a manner that is consistent with KMK practices and concepts?
- Does the candidate teach at KMK-sponsored events?
- Does the candidate represent the KMK at external events?