

IMI International Integrity Letter

Date: 15 July 2021

Re: Formation of the International Mindfulness Integrity Network (IMI Network)

Dear Mindfulness Colleagues around the world,

This letter updates you on the development of the International Mindfulness Integrity Network (IMI Network - www.iminetwork.org). There are now opportunities for teacher training centres for MBSR, MBCT and other empirically supported MBPs (hereafter referred to generically as MBPs¹), who are aligned with the standards to support next steps.

Since 2014, there have been many preparatory steps towards the formation of this network. This letter updates you on progress and next steps.

History of the Integrity network

During 2015, a series of workshops took place around the world inviting exploration and sharing on whether there was interest and energy to collaborate to form a network. There was clear consensus from these meetings that an International Integrity Network could serve a valuable function in supporting the integrity and cohesiveness of the field.

A vision crystalized to create an international group that supports teachers and trainers in maintaining the integrity of evidence-based, researched mindfulness-based programs grounded in awareness, compassion, and wisdom, upheld by an interconnected, diverse, and global network dedicated to promoting health, well-being, and ease, for the benefit of all beings.

From the initial meetings ([see Appendix 2](#)), 9 colleagues were nominated to form a transitional working group who were tasked with proposing:

- a vision and mission for the international network,
- structures that could support the organization's function, enabling representation, transparency and appropriate inclusivity for the network going forward,
- evolving governance of this network, and
- Training standards and Ethical guidelines.

We are pleased to report that this group conducted some careful and thoughtful work that we hope will now form a foundation for taking next steps. You can see the results of their work on the network's [website](#). The *Ethics and standards for practice* are [here](#), and an article describing the work is [here](#).

Importantly, *how* they engaged together to create these documents is just as significant. It is the first time that this emergent field has attempted to create connection and consensus from the ground up, across cultures and geography on good practice and integrity in mindfulness-based teaching and training. There are sensitivities and nuances that need thoughtful dialogue within the context of a safe space. The group have created a vessel within which this delicate work can take place, and we believe

¹ MBP programs are: Informed by a clear rationale; Teacher-led; Have been developed to be scalable; Have a set curriculum, typically at least eight sessions with 30 – 45 mins daily home practice, incremental development, and experiential learning; and have a clear commitment to be evidence-based.

that through this they have sown seeds which can be fruitfully nurtured going forward. We are not exactly sure what the next steps will be, however, we do know a second phase is needed. A characteristic of this process is that no single individual or body is in charge – it is an emergent process created through non-hierarchical dialogue. In this regard, we are honing closely to principles grounded in mindfulness and practice, rather than linking to business models or competitive market strategies.

Whilst we recognise that there is a need to develop governance in the context of delivery of mindfulness in retreat settings, and other non-standard formats, we also believe that governance for the delivery of the range of evidenced-based mindfulness-based programmes that have emerged out of MBSR is best grown within this collaborative context. Why? Because careful work on integrity and standards has already taken place over many years across the world, and the people and organizations involved in these developments are part of this network.

As a global network, we aim to expand geographical diversity. We aspire to work in connection with teachers' associations and training schools going forward, with each initiative giving energy to the areas that we are already directly engaged in and therefore know most about.

Next Phase

So how do we go from here? These are the elements that we know about the next phase:

- The process is important and needs to continue.
- IMI needs to discover how to best support and relate to training organisations internationally, and through this ensure that the documents on standards, integrity and ethics are living documents that proactively support ongoing personal and collective inquiry on these issues.
- The work conducted so far is just the beginning. The next working group will be tasked with taking the work to another level. The next phase needs to include learning from current and past challenges related to integrity, ethics, and accountability within the MBP field, developing ways to support regions and groups to address grievances and conflict resolution; and making ethical standards for all players within the field explicit and equal (i.e., teachers, supervisors, trainers, and training organisations).
- A strong value and aim include expanding representation of geographical areas and populations that are currently underrepresented in our field generally.
- The organic emergent nature of the development is vital - whilst there is some urgency to get things in place, we need to also allow it to unfold at a pace that allows attention to process and at the same time not sacrifice what needs to be addressed.
- the individuals engaged in this work are offering service as an additional element to their everyday commitments within their own contexts, so we need to be patient and hold them with gratitude and compassion.

Your Involvement

If you wish to support and be part of the work of the IMI Network, there are different ways to do this:

1. Adopting the IMI Network's document on Ethics and Standards within your organisation

We invite you to engage with the *Training Standards and Ethical Guidelines* and use it as a foundation for your MBP teaching and training. The document could serve as a source of

information on your website and can be the starting place for personal and organisational inquiry on the ethical foundations for your work. Websites could also share a link to the IMI website.

2. Applying for a place in the IMI Working Group

If you wish to play a more active role in the network, we invite you to apply to join the Working group. Read next pages for more details on the Working group.

Much gratitude to you all for your patience as this process unfolds.

May this engagement together support the development of this work, and so in turn facilitate the growth of compassion and wisdom across the world.

Warm regards,

From the IMI working group
(see Appendices 1 & 2)

Working Group Membership of the IMI Network

We are currently seeking additional members with a strong background in mindfulness-based programs to help us through the next stages of our development in this work of standards and ethics for teachers and teacher-training. We aim to have a Working group with the following expertise in:

- Development and implementation of policies and standards.
- MBP teaching and training.
- Running a not-for-profit organisation.
- Community development and engagement.
- Equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), especially as it relates to the mindfulness field.
- Marketing and communications.

While we do not expect any individual to span this wide range of expertise, and we aim to build and maintain a working team that as a whole provides us with the leadership across this broad spectrum.

Role specification

The working group members are the guardians of the organisation, ensuring it stays within its remit. This will include:

- Contributing to the activities and conversations of the working group around ethics and standards.
- Developing and reviewing current documents as resources for ethics and standards development.
- Acting as ambassadors for the organization and representing the organization in different forums.
- Acting as support in pointing out areas for improvement.

Location, remuneration and time commitments

Working group members are not remunerated. All meetings take place online.

There are about 6 scheduled working group meetings a year, of about two hours duration. There will be time required to read, contribute to papers, and develop ideas in advance of meetings. Over and above the working group meetings, a member may volunteer for other activities, such as:

- leading a sub working group.
- participating in a project.
- representing IMI Network on various governance arrangements with partner organisations.

The working group will continue with about 10 members at any one time and will meet regularly to progress the Network's vision and mission. Members will serve a maximum term of four years. As members step out, other colleagues around the world will be nominated to join. Several members of the current working group will remain in role for a short period beyond the 4-year term to support the transition to the next phase and will then step out. We invite colleagues to step in and play an active role. We especially welcome representation of geographical areas that are currently underrepresented in the field.

To apply: email a brief CV, a letter stating what draws you to the role, your vision for IMI going forward, a brief description of how your (training) organisation aligns with the *Training Standards and Ethical Guidelines*, and the ways in which you are positioned to represent your region (i.e., not just your own organisation). If you don't meet the above criteria but are moved to offer service to this endeavour and feel you bring qualities that would be supportive and enabling, please apply and address these areas in your application. Please see the Person Specification on the next page.

All materials submitted will be held in confidence within the current working group membership. Send your application to: info@iminetwork.org. Closing date 31 August 2021.

If we would like to collaborate with you, we will ask you to supply two references from experienced mindfulness-based teacher trainers/supervisors laying out your suitability for this role.

Person specification

Requirements	Essential	Desirable
Qualifications and professional Training	Degree-level qualification or equivalent experience.	
Experience/ Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Senior - i.e., have a lot of experience as a teacher trainer within an established/empirically underpinned 8-week Mindfulness-Based (teacher training) organisation. – Able to represent both their own training organisation and the region within which they work (i.e., they are well respected, well networked, and well trusted within their wider community). – Representative of different geographical areas in the world and of different sorts of training organisation. At any one time the working group needs to have a spread of geography, and a spread of individuals who work within different contexts (i.e., universities and independent training institutes). Every effort will be made to include diverse representatives of groups and populations in the mindfulness context. Sensitivity to various regional and global realities is required. <p>We also encourage colleagues from underrepresented <i>regions</i> in the world to join the working group. We acknowledge that it is possible that these colleagues will be unable to fully work within established good practice guidance. For this group we are seeking to include those who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Are pioneering mindfulness-based teaching develop-ments in a context that currently has little or no activity. – Have undertaken teacher training themselves in MBSR or related programme, and who are linked by supervision with an experienced colleague. <p>In addition, extensive knowledge, and experience in <u>one or more</u> of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ community development ▪ fundraising ▪ working with diversity (including training) ▪ management/governance in charitable organisations ▪ marketing ▪ teaching experience in a school, college, or university ▪ mindfulness delivery in a health, criminal justice, education, or workplace setting ▪ information technology 	Experience of being part of a 'virtual' geo-graphically spread organisation
Skills and attributes	<p>Strong interpersonal skills.</p> <p>A team player, able to work towards a shared vision.</p>	Experience in a similar role. Knowledge and experience in not-for-profit sector.
Personal qualities and abilities	Commitment to the integrity, quality, and development of mindfulness-based approaches, acknowledging both the importance and limits of current research.	Open to innovation and creative approach to challenges

Appendix 1: Facilitators of the Initial Exploratory Meetings held during 2015

Jud Brewer, Mindfulness Center at Brown University School of Public Health, Providence, RI, US
Tim Burnett, Mindfulness Northwest, US
Rebecca Crane, Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice, Bangor, UK
Willem Kuyken, Oxford Mindfulness Centre, UK
Karin Ek Dahl, Karolinska Institute, Sweden
Christina Feldman, independent teacher/trainer, UK
Lot Heijke, independent teacher/trainer, the Netherlands
Steven Hickman, Center for Mindful Self Compassion
Maura Kenny, Mindfulness Training Institute, Australasia
Linda Lehrhaupt, Institute for Mindfulness-Based Approaches, Germany
Florence Meleo-Meyer, Center for Mindfulness-UMass Medical School
Catherine Phillips, University of Alberta, The Mindfulness Institute, Canada
Saki Santorelli, Independent teacher/trainer, US
Susan Woods, Independent teacher/trainer, US

Appendix 2: Members of the Transitional Working Group

Maura Kenny, Mindfulness Training Institute, Australasia (co-lead)
Günter Hudasch, Achtsamkeitszentrum, Berlin, Germany (co-lead)
Taravajra, Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice, UK
Linda Kantor, Institute for Mindfulness, South Africa
Lynn Koerbel, Mindfulness Center at Brown University School of Public Health, Providence, RI, US
Lot Heijke, Independent teacher / trainer, the Netherlands
Allan Goldstein, UC San Diego Center for Mindfulness, San Diego, CA, US
Catherine Phillips, The Mindfulness Institute, University of Alberta, Canada
Trish Luck, University of Rochester Medical School, US

Midwives (the Advisory Group)

Florence Meleo-Meyer, Mindfulness Center at Brown University School of Public Health, Providence, RI, US
Dawn MacDonald, Mindfulness and Well-Being Consultancy Inc., Winnipeg, Canada
Camilla Sköld, Center for Mindfulness Sweden and Karolinska Institutet, Sweden
Linda Lehrhaupt, Institute for Mindfulness-Based Approaches, Germany
Tim Burnett, Mindfulness Northwest, Bellingham, WA, US
Rebecca Crane, Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice, Bangor, UK