

General considerations

This document provides a general guideline for the topics that can be taught in Open Courses, and also delineates that which can not be taught in order to be supported by ATIF.

We are all aware that nobody has the authority to give indications of this type except the Master himself. Fortunately Rinpoche repeatedly gave clear explanations on this issue, which have been collected and summarized in this document.

The main characteristic of Open Courses is that everything related to Sutra teachings can be freely taught in the three aspects of View, Meditation and Behavior, whereas teachings and methods related to Tantra and Dzogchen should not be taught, since they require Empowerments, Direct Introduction or transmission of lungs. ***Chögyal Namkhai Norbu never authorized any SMS teacher to give Initiations, Direct Transmission in any form, or Lungs***, so such an activity can not be recognized by ATIF.

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu encouraged instructors to teach according to circumstances, entering the dimension of those present. Therefore, while establishing clear boundaries in terms of content, these guidelines do not intend to constrain the style of communicating of each individual instructor. Nevertheless, they need to speak and behave in an appropriate manner, avoiding divisive opinions, such as those related to gender, politics, religion, race, etc

Content and intention of Open Courses

The aim of these courses is to aid participants to develop awareness of their existence as a whole: how their Body, Energy and Mind function and interact. Based on this understanding they can discover how to free limitations and evolve, living a more joyful life.

In terms of examples for the View, teachers can describe to those interested the basis of Buddhist philosophy, such as the Four Noble Truths, the Four Awarenesses that change the mental attitude, the Six Paramitas, advice on karma, faith and how to follow a Teacher. They can also talk about the Three Gates, their functions and the general overview of the Three Paths of Liberation.

In terms of examples for Meditation, teachers could explain the Three Sacred Fundamentals and give advice on body posture, breathing, and ways to develop ordinary presence and awareness. They can also teach other methods from Hinayana and Mahayana such as the Four Applications of Presence, the Four Immeasurables, and so on.

In terms of examples for Behavior, teachers could explain the essence of Hinayana: not harming others and of Mahayana: working with intention, for the benefits of others. As well, teachers can define the importance of integrating ordinary presence and awareness in the actions of daily life, and to use self-observation to discover the function of the mind, its movements and its limits.

As we all know, practices related to Vajrayana empowerments and Dzogchen Transmission such as Semdzin, Rushen, Kumbhaka and prana related practices cannot be taught in open courses.

References

The reference texts are the open part of the Precious Vase (The Way to Enter the Teaching) and other open materials from Chögyal Namkhai Norbu such as The Mirror, The Crystal and the Way of Light, etc.