

GRADING PANEL GUIDE

Managing the Grading



Course Organiser

1. Pre grading

- Ensure that the venue is suitable for use, i.e. capable of holding the expected number of candidates and spectators, including facilities for disabled spectators with a sufficiently sized mat area.
- Select panel members a month before the grading and make them aware of what is expected from them.
- Request all club senseis to ask their club members to attend both as ukes and as spectators. Ukes can have their membership book stamped and it will count as a course if grading in the subsequent year.
- Ensure that the mats are in good condition and laid correctly.
- Ensure that first aid provision is available and a means to summon emergency aid is readily available.
- Check that the candidates are eligible to take the grading, i.e. paid-up members, attended requisite number of courses.
- Ensure that candidates have received necessary paperwork in good time before the day of the gradings.
- Split the candidates into manageable size groups for the mat area; try to put candidates from the same club into different groups.
- Determine if any candidate has any health issues and inform the Panel President of any cases. Health issues should either be:
 - Long-term/permanent in nature, in which case allowances within the grading should be made, i.e. Asthma, chronic knee problems; or
 - Minor health issues which are not likely to be aggravated by taking part in the grading. These should not require any allowances towards pass/fail criteria, i.e. minor sprains/strains which have been properly strapped up.
 - Candidates suffering from short-term health issues which are likely to be aggravated by taking part in the grading should be deferred until next time.
- Ensure that the panel members have copies of the grading papers and pencils to make notes.

2. Spectators

- The spectators are to be placed so as not to interfere with candidates and ukes access to the matted area or emergency exits from the venue.
- Noise/distractive behaviour is to be kept to an absolute minimum during a grading.
- Flash photography is not to be allowed.
- Mobile phones put on silent.
- Videoing is allowed but cameras must be set up where they do not interfere with another spectator's view.

3. During the grading

- Ensure that panel members, candidates and ukes are ready in time for their grading.
- Ensure that any accident recording takes place.

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Panel President

1. Pre grading

- Ensure that you arrive in plenty of time before the grading starts to complete pre grading requirements.
- Allow sufficient time for those taking gradings and ukes to fully warm up.
- Brief the panel members on any health issues regarding grading candidates.
- Put candidates at their ease so they can put on their best performances.

2. During the grading

- Excessive noise or behaviour by spectators which causes distraction to those grading must be controlled. It may be more difficult to get the attention of spectators so it may even be necessary to stand up and face them to get their attention.
- Stop the grading should any potentially dangerous situation occur.
- Filter and relay any requests from the panel members to grading participants.
- Change any unsuitable ukes immediately it becomes apparent that they are hampering the ability of the grading candidate to show his best aikido.
(Amplification of this aspect is given in the General Guidance given below.)
- Comply with the general guidance given below.

3. Post grading

- Report to the Chief Examiner and apprise him of the panel's decisions. In certain circumstances, he may feel that it is necessary to revise a decision, so it is very important not to discuss any results with the candidates until this meeting has concluded.
- Brief candidates who failed their grading and their instructors on the panel's reasons for their [its] decision.
- If requested, brief successful candidates and their instructors on any areas observed during the grading which may require particular attention in preparation for a future grading, i.e. areas of weakness in their grading which could potentially have resulted in a failure.
- Sign and date certificates for those candidates who passed.
- Present the certificates at the end of the gradings.

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Panel Members

1. Pre grading

- Arrive in plenty of time before you are required to sit on the grading panel, this is to ensure that the panel president has time to brief you on any issues relevant to the grading, i.e. candidate health issues and for you to get changed.

2. During the grading

- Inform the president immediately you see potentially dangerous situations occurring.
- Place all requests for candidates/ukes through the panel president.
- Comply with the general guidance given below.

3. Post Grading

- Once the panel's decision on the candidates has been agreed upon, remarks about any dissent, including your own within the panel, about the results is to be avoided.

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GENERAL GUIDANCE

1. Etiquette

Dojo etiquette is to be maintained, for example:

- Candidates, ukes and panel members are to be tidily dressed.
- Candidates, ukes and panel members should bow on to and off the mat area.
- A bow to O-Sensei should be performed at the beginning and end of a grading.
- Candidates should bow to the panel and ukes at the start and end of a grading.

2. Mindset

- Your intention should be to try to pass candidates rather than setting out to fail them by nit-picking on each and every fault you observe.
- Try to be impartial, techniques are not automatically wrong just because they are performed in a different style to your own and may be seem to you to be less effective.
- Don't expect perfection - 85% is good.
- If the overall percentage falls below 70% in your opinion, you must award a fail.
- If the percentage falls below 60% in any one category you should award a fail.

3. Assessing the candidate

- On the grading sheet supplied place a tick or a cross against each technique on the grading paper.
- If a technique is considered to be performed to an insufficiently high standard you must make a brief note as to why you considered it to be not good enough, for example:
 - Fumbled takes
 - Poor taisabaki
 - Incorrect technique
 - Techniques applied in a dangerous manner
- Notes should also be made of incorrect principles which are common to more than one technique, for example:
 - Bad posture
 - Incorrect distancing
 - Poor balance breaking or giving back posture
 - Failing to move off line

These notes are to be passed to the panel president. Should a candidate fail it is critical that a detailed briefing can be given to them and their instructor as to the reasons for the candidate's failure, also should a candidate want to know what areas the panel think they should work on in order to improve their standard the notes can be useful to do this rather than relying on memory.

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4. Managing the Candidates

- **Regulate pace of the grading.**
 - Ensure that any appointed reader does not start to accelerate the grading by speeding up their reading.
 - If necessary stop the grading to explain that candidates are going way too fast which may result in excessive tiring especially if health issues are involved.
 - Request that you want to see techniques performed more slowly.
- If necessary give candidates a warning that the requested technique is not being performed.
- You may ask to see a variation if only a basic form of a technique has been demonstrated.
- You may ask to see a technique performed on both sides if only one side is being demonstrated or irimi or tenkan if only one version is being shown.
- Take care not to micro-manage.
 - NEVER correct a candidate's technique during a grading.
 - Keep interruptions to a minimum so as not to spoil a candidate's concentration or the flow of the grading.
 - Only give a couple of warnings for incorrect techniques – too many incorrect techniques means the candidate is not ready for the grade and should be failed.
 - Only ask for a few variations and certainly not for every technique.

5. Managing ukes

- Ukes must be of a sufficient standard for the grading being taken if not they should be excluded from taking part in the grading.
 - For general Kyu gradings ukes should be no more than one grade below that of the grading.
 - For 1st Kyu and above ukes must be of at least 1st Kyu standard.
- The panel president must be prepared to remove ukes from the mat who do not meet the required standard so as to allow the candidates to perform the techniques safely and to the best of their ability. Examples of behaviour from ukes which may warrant this action are:
 - Attacks that are different to that requested
 - Weak attacks that are not sufficiently committed or without any intent
 - Attacks that are too slow or too fast for the level of grading being taken
 - Attacks are off target
 - Being too awkward, i.e. using knowledge of the requested technique to cause it to fail
 - Being too compliant (from the same club perhaps!)
 - Poor Ukemi
 - Gi or obi in disarray
 - Tired/out of breath/ injured

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- If an uke is removed for any reason except excessive tiredness, lack of breath or injury then the panel president, after the grading, should inform them of the reason for doing so.
- Swap ukes around on a regular basis
 - Between candidates to ensure that all candidates can show their aikido against different people, reduce the effects of possible collusion between candidates and ukes of the same club and abnormal discrepancies, i.e. excessive height differences.
 - Between ukes on the mat and reserve ukes to allow ukes a chance to recuperate.

6. Equipment

- Any equipment used in the grading, i.e. weapons, is to be in good condition and no sharp weaponry is to be allowed.
- Where lanyards which loop around the wrist are available, as with chains for example, they should be used.
- Any exotic weaponry should be assessed for suitability.