

# Tai Chi & Qigong Union for Great Britain

## Qigong Assessment Guidance for Applicants

### How can we help you to become an instructor member?

If you are intending to apply to become a registered qigong instructor with the Tai Chi and Qigong Union for Great Britain, or to upgrade to a higher level of qigong or whole art instructor membership, we want to help you in every way we can.

We are very much aware that it takes years of study and practice to become proficient in any Chinese Internal Art and we are delighted that you have reached a stage where you feel ready to pass on your hard-earned skills to others.

At the same time, we need to ensure that the quality of these arts is maintained. So please read this short guide carefully. If possible, print it off as a checklist that you can work through in order to give you the best possible chance of having your application accepted.

### What happens when you apply for instructor membership of the Union?

Your application form, references, and video evidence of your skills are received by the membership secretary, who passes them on to the Technical Panel: a group of Senior Instructors who have studied, practised, and taught internal arts for many decades. Between them, their knowledge and experience include a wide range of styles and aspects of Qigong.

The Technical Panel will then assess your evidence to see if it is sufficient to show that you have the skills to demonstrate movements in a safe manner and at an appropriate level.

It is always great to welcome a new member into the Union and we hate to disappoint anyone by finding ourselves unable to approve their application, whether that's due to insufficient evidence having been provided or to an inappropriate level of skill having been evidenced, so here are some tips to ensure that you have the best possible chance of having your application approved by the Technical Panel.

Please note that the following advice relates to Qigong. There are separate requirements for Tai Chi and associated internal martial arts.

### How to prepare for your Technical Panel assessment

- Make sure that you have been training with an experienced and knowledgeable instructor who is able to teach you an authentic style of your chosen qigong form/s to an appropriate standard. Be aware from your teacher of the name and historical lineage of your chosen form/s, as far as possible.
- Make sure you have an adequate understanding of the energy system of the body for your chosen form/s. This would include an appropriate level of knowledge about qi flows in the body and positions of relevant acupoints.
- If you are claiming to have expertise to teach Medical Qigong / Clinical Qigong please check with your own, or the TCUGB's insurer, to ensure that you have adequate qualifications to use this terminology appropriately in the UK. Those advertising Medical or Clinical Qigong should be aware that this is generally defined by insurers as a 1:1 therapeutic practice with the Practitioner holding high level Chinese medicine qualifications appropriate to diagnostic and prescriptive use of qigong. NB some qigong forms classed as 'medical' in China have been promoted for teaching as general-health qigong. We recommend that such forms are advertised in the UK as 'Qigong for Health.'
- Make sure that you practise/have practised until your skills are at a level appropriate for sharing with others.
- Make sure that your techniques and postures are safe and unlikely to cause injury to yourself or your students (for example by causing damage to the joints due to incorrect posture or load bearing).

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- If your instructor has given you permission to teach, or will give you a reference, or has issued a certificate for your achievements, these may be useful in support of your application.
- Record one or more videos of yourself doing the forms and skills you are wishing to teach.
- Check your own performance according to the principles and grading criteria listed below. If in doubt, get someone else to look at your video(s) with you and give you honest feedback.
- Make sure you are not doing anything on the list of things to avoid. If necessary, you are strongly advised to correct any errors and re-record your video(s).
- Make sure your video(s) is/are representative of the main styles, forms or arts that you are teaching, if possible. (For example, if you are claiming to be able to teach a Ba Duan Jin Qigong set, or Shibashi Set/s, please make sure you perform the movements of the set/s with their correct sequence, transitions and choreography - not just the first few movements. In the instance of long forms (e.g. your ba duan jin form may be in 8 sections and take over an hour to perform), please ask for guidance from the Technical Panel about what they would like to see you demonstrate.
- Then submit your application form, references if you have them, and video(s) to the Membership Secretary.

## What's involved in a Technical Panel assessment?

Your video footage will be passed to all members of the Technical Panel, who will each assess what you are doing and make notes on what they have seen. If the qigong system is deemed by the panel members to be either a lesser known or modern form of qigong, then additional evidence regarding the creation, heritage, lineage, and methodology of the system will be required. The Panel also has independent qigong experts that they may call upon.

The Technical Panel meets every 2 months, in person or online, to discuss the current applicants. They will discuss the level of skills you have demonstrated and make a decision as to whether your skills are suitable for teaching to others. They then make a recommendation about each applicant to the Board of Directors of TCUGB in line with our articles of association as a CIC.

You will then receive feedback from the Membership Secretary on the decision as to whether you are:

- Accepted as an instructor member of the Union at an appropriate grade, or
- Not yet accepted, due to insufficient evidence having been submitted or your skills requiring further improvement to reach a standard suitable for teaching your chosen discipline to others.

## What are we looking for?

To be admitted as an instructor, or to be upgraded to a higher level if you are already an instructor member, your video evidence must show that you understand and are able to demonstrate, through your own movements, the main principles underlying your chosen form(s) of qigong.

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## Variety of Qigong

Most qigong in the UK is practised for health and wellbeing, but many systems and methodologies of qigong exist. The term qigong has only been in use since the 1950s, but is used here by TCUGB to include other Chinese terms that historically relate to self-development by working with qi, such as neigong and daoyin. Styles and systems of qigong may differ from each other in many ways, but they also have things in common, and all have a lineage that you should know something about, from your own teacher. Actions that may be called the 'Three Regulations,' are what differentiate qigong from other types of exercise. These are regulating the body, regulating the mind, and regulating the breath. For assessment purposes by video, it will be necessary to see physical actions, however a practitioner may additionally submit a video of themselves teaching verbally how to use breath and mind, whilst demonstrating a more static or passive form.

TCUGB will be publishing articles about the history and variety of qigong and these will appear in our Tai Chi Chuan & Internal Arts Journal and on our website.

## Assessments for Standing Practice

Assessors will look at the written documentation provided. In the video/s they will be looking for:

- Correct posture and alignment before movement commences
- Correct posture and alignment and during the specific chosen form(s), with particular attention to alignment and connection of head, from crown through neck and torso; upper limbs (shoulder blades, shoulders, elbows, hands); lower limbs (feet, ankles, knees, hips).
- Level of whole-body connectivity and openness - torso connection to the components above. Is the wholebody moving harmoniously, or working body components and sections well to loosen and engage better connectivity and qi flow?
- A well-grounded connection with the earth, with clear and robust use of legs throughout
- Connection to heaven, earth, and the environment, as evidenced in choreography and intent
- Relaxed body with no inappropriate tension visible (unless part of a deliberate routine)
- Stable and balanced movements
- Appropriate regulation of breath, and sounds (if applicable), where discernible
- Evidence of qi movement, discernible within the performance of qigong set(s)
- Correct sequence, choreography, and transitions within forms.
- Steady presence, focus and intent
- Qualities of yin-yang interplay
- Smoothness and fluidity
- A vibrant aliveness

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## Common errors to avoid:

This is trickier for qigong than tai chi and internal martial arts because of the variety of styles and exercises. So, there may be exceptions for seated or lying down qigong.

- Lifting the chin too high or dropping it too low. The neck should have an openness and not kink at the occiput.
- Gaze should be appropriately angled for each movement, not consistently looking at the floor or upwards.
- Looking from side to side and twisting your neck inappropriately to appear to get more waist or hip turn
- Weighted knee or knees projecting in front of the toes, you should still be able to see your toes as you look down past your knee.
- Arching your back and sticking your bottom out behind you, which can be corrected by relaxing down further into your posture and allowing your tailbone to drop so that your spine naturally finds its correct alignment.
- Lifting your shoulders and/or elbows unduly. Shoulder blades should drop to raise arms.
- Performing the movements in a stiff, jerky, or robotic manner. Movements should be relaxed, smooth and continuous, unless you are expressing sudden releasing or explosive movements, for example, though even these should still be smooth, controlled, relaxed and powerful.
- Performing the movements too loosely without any structure or stability.
- Performing the movements in far too small a range of movement
- Moving the arms independently of the body (unless in loosening/warm-up qigong) instead of allowing them to follow the continuous flow from the dantien and waist.
- Locking your knees out inappropriately rather than sinking and rooting.
- No evidence of qi movement, practitioner is just doing physical exercises
- Over-reaching, e.g. by locking the arms out straight.
- Falling into your movement because the weight was not fully in one leg.
- Too narrow stances, as if you are walking on a tightrope, resulting in instability or loss of balance and an inability to sink, open the kwa or use the waist and/or dantien effectively.
- Awkward foot positions that put strain on the knees or other joints, for example leading to the knee/s collapsing inwards or bowing outwards. Another error involves turning the foot outwards in a forward stance instead of remaining in line with the knee, so that full body weight is then transferred into a twisted knee and ankle. Where the foot does turn out before stepping forwards, injury can be avoided by turning the body in that direction first so that the foot can naturally align itself with your nose and breastbone before you transfer any weight into that leg.

Many of these errors could cause injury to joints, yours, and those of your students, particularly if you may be teaching people in older age groups.

You are strongly advised to look carefully at your video(s) of yourself doing your form(s) to ensure that you are not making any of these mistakes, before submitting any video for assessment. To avoid disappointment, do be sure to correct any errors and re-film your sequence(s) before sending in any material to the Technical Panel or teaching your form to others. Remember to demonstrate all the movements of the main forms you intend to teach, or about half of a very long form. We need to see enough to know that you can do it properly all the way through.

We wish you luck with your endeavours and hope to hear from you soon.

Kind regards,

The Technical Panel