

CONFIDENTIAL

# OFFICIAL STANDARDS

The American Karate Black Belt Association/Chin Sook Hage Kwan, Inc.



## 1. Purposes

The American Karate Black Belt Association/Chin Sook Hage Kwan, Inc. is a Texas, Non-Profit Corporation incorporated as an "Amateur Athletic Association." Its purposes are:

- To provide an amateur athletic organization where members may assist each other in the advancement of training and knowledge of the martial arts of karate, tae kwon do, and kung fu.
- To qualify and develop as many "Affiliates" as prudent with the high standards and traditions of our founders, to oversee the successful elevation of all martial arts within our influence, and to offer legitimate and recognizable rank certification to our Affiliates as approved by the governing High Dan Board.

## 2. Governance

The Association is governed by a **High Dan Board** made up of Association Affiliates who hold the rank of 8th Dan or higher and who are nominated, vetted, and then elected by the present Board. They act as the official Board of Directors for the Corporation. They oversee and direct all standards for admission to the Association and for black belt promotions and the presentations of such. They also serve as instructors, advisors, and ambassadors of the Association.

The High Dan Board has an elected **Chairman** who presides at HDB meetings and who works closely with the **Executive Director** (the day-to-day operations manager and also a member of the HDB) between scheduled meetings in the operation of the Association. The HDB also has an elected **Vice-Chairman, Secretary** and **Treasurer**. In addition there are **Emeritus Members** of the High Dan Board. These individuals may attend HDB meetings and offer advice but they are not voting members of the board. The Chairman may appoint certain members to serve on special committees such as "promotions" or "continuing education."

See the "Association By-Laws" for a more detailed look at Governing procedures.

*The current High Dan Board consists of the following elected members:*

Charles Bouton (Executive Director and Treasurer)  
Steve Doss  
Linda Denley  
Roy Kurban  
John Liles (Secretary)  
Rick MoneyMaker  
Thomas Muncy  
Ishmael Robles  
Steve Selby (Vice-Chairman)  
William Shelton  
Robert Smith  
Keith D. Yates (Chairman)

*Emeritus members of the High Dan Board are:*

Allen Steen (President Emeritus)  
J. Pat Purleson (Original HDB and Affiliate Emeritus)  
Ed Daniel (Original HDB and Affiliate Emeritus)  
Skipper Mullins (Original HDB and Affiliate Emeritus)  
James Toney (Chairman Emeritus)  
Royce Young (Vice- Chairman Emeritus)  
Richard Jenkins (HDB, HDB Secretary, Secretary Emeritus )  
Tim Vought (HDB, HDB Secretary Emeritus)  
Ronnie Cox (Original AKBBA and CSHK HDB, Secretary Emeritus [deceased])  
Jack Erickson (Original Affiliate Emeritus)  
Fred Wren (Original Affiliate Emeritus)

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### 3. Levels of Membership

The basic level is **ASSOCIATE MEMBER**. These are practitioners of the martial arts who have joined the Association under the auspices of a current Affiliate or High Dan Board members. There is no rank requirement for this level of membership. Membership fees are paid directly to the Affiliate under which they are approved (see below).

The full level is an **AFFILIATE MEMBER**. One must hold the rank of 3rd Dan or higher certified by a Dantai Affiliate, a HDB member or previously recognized by the AKBBA/CSHK. In addition, this individual must either own a school or are the chief instructor/director of a martial arts club, and have at least 10 Associate members signed up under them.\* Affiliation rests with this individual and if/when they no longer own or teach at said club or school, a new application must be filed with the Association.

First time applicants must agree to a review of their martial arts qualifications. Affiliate membership fees are \$50 annually and are paid to Association Headquarters (although most will qualify for a FREE membership). In addition there is a yearly administrative fee for the Affiliate school based on their "class status." There are also discounts provided on products (extra patches, t-shirts, jackets) and on promotional fees and certificates.

<b>Class C:</b> 10–25 members	\$50 Administrative Fee	Free membership to Head Instructor (Affiliate)	5% off products, 10% on promotion fees
<b>Class B:</b> 26–50 members	\$25 Administrative Fee	Free membership to Head Instructor (Affiliate)	10% off products, 15% on promotion fees
<b>Class A:</b> over 50 members	NO Administrative Fee	2 free memberships to Affiliate and one other Black Belt Instructor	15% off products, 20% on promotion fees Promotion/Certificate fee waived for Head Instructor

The **Affiliate's Council** is made up of Class A and B Affiliates. This council provides feedback from the membership to the High Dan Board on matters of Association procedures and benefits. An appointed HDB member serves as the liaison between the Council and the HDB.

An additional, organizational level is a **Dantai Affiliate**. This is not an individual but another martial arts organization or federation which affiliates with the Association. A Dantai Affiliate operates their own organization independently from the AKBBA/CSHK, but agrees to adhere to our standards. They include: Kokusai Dai Ni Gojuryu Karate Kyokai; Shorin Aikibudo Association; the Dragon Society International; the American Karate and Tae Kwon Do Organization; and the International Modern Arnis Federation. Members of these organizations are not automatically members of the AKBBA/CSHK unless they undergo the application process.

### 4. Membership Requirements

All who agree to abide by the Association standards may apply. Applicants for the Affiliated Membership must fill out both the **1)** Affiliate application form and the **2)** black belt resume form (both can be downloaded at **www.akbba.com**). We will conduct a review of your martial arts resume. If you are not personally known to an existing Affiliate or High Dan Board member we may ask for a demonstration of appropriate level of skill and teaching ability by either an in-person visit or by video. We also reserve the right to request a "background check" which would be paid for by the applicant. Applications are processed and sent to the HDB and a vote is usually taken within 3 to 5 weeks.

Associate Member status is open to all students under an Affiliated Member or a High Dan Board Member.

We will provide an Associate Member application form via PDF. Associates can fill out the form and turn it into the Affiliate who, in turn, will provide a list of their members to Association headquarters.

### 5. Fees

As indicated above, annual Affiliate membership fee is \$50. However a FREE membership is included in a Class C Affiliate status (at least 10 Associates signed up). There is also the school Administrative fee listed above.

Associate fees are paid directly to the Affiliate member. Contact us about further membership packet options.\*\*

\* The HDB may make exceptions to these requirements for clubs with under ten members.

\*\* Associate member packets contain patches and cards.

## 6. Rank Promotions/Certifications

Belt rank promotion and certification is the exclusive prerogative of the High Dan Board. All ranking standards and requirements are set and approved by this board. Since the Association accepts members from multiple styles, the number, colors, and requirements of lower belt ranks will vary. And because we only accept Affiliates who maintain high standards, we trust them to appropriately train and promote their own underbelt (mudansha) students. Affiliates may obtain Association certificates for their lower belts students (provided these students are current Associate members). Blank, underbelt 8 1/2 x 11 certificates are \$2 each in packages of 25 (postage included). They are signed by the Executive Director with lines provided for the Affiliate/head instructor and other examining judges to sign.

**As a “Black Belt Association” our list of standards are therefore centered on the black belt ranks (yudansha).**

The Association recognizes that children and young people benefit from martial arts training and we agree that it is appropriate for them to be rewarded for their efforts and skills. However we also believe that it is a mistake to routinely lump children and adults together into a black belt ranking system since their physical, intellectual, and emotional capabilities differ.

Therefore we acknowledge a **Junior Black Belt** designation. We will provide Junior Black Belt Recognition Certificates to young people 13–17 years of age (this is a service to our Affiliate who does the actual promotion of his or her students). We do not offer a certificate higher than 2nd Dan to a junior practitioner. ALL black belt certificates (even “juniors”) MUST come from Association headquarters after a submitted request with resume. Junior Dan certificates are 11 “ x 17”.

In **adult Black Belt ranks** there are generally 10 Dan grades (some Korean systems only promote to 9th Dan). Under these AKBBA/CSHK standards, 1st through 8th Dan are considered earned rank levels and are awarded after an extensive resume review and, typically, a physical examination or performance.

Our founder Allen R. Steen set the original standards for black belts with the idea that the examination for **1ST DAN** would be a complete and physically exhausting performance of all the candidate’s knowledge of the martial arts up to that point. As the direct descendents of Grandmaster Steen, the AKBBA/CSHK also requires a comprehensive examination for this first black belt rank.

Therefore it would include every training pattern used in the system (not just a representative sample), one-step sparring drills (kihon kumite), self-defense against empty-handed and stick/knife attacks, basic kicking and blocking demonstrations and up to a dozen or more free-sparring matches against opponents of equal or greater rank. Of course, each school is free to add to these requirements (and we expect that they would) but this would be the absolute minimum performance accepted for the Association certification to 1st Dan.

We realize that time to 1st Dan varies with the system and instructor however our minimum is three years of total time in training to this rank. An 11” x 17” parchment certificate is offered with the signature of the Executive Director and places for other examiners to sign. The certificate fee for 1st Dan is \$30 (\$50 foreign). Association headquarters must have at least four weeks to process a black belt certificate request.

Certification of **1ST THROUGH 5TH DAN** can be awarded by any Affiliate member who holds a rank at least two degrees higher than the grade being awarded (i.e. a 4th Dan may award a 2nd Dan, etc.). Junior rank holders may not award any promotional certifications. Adult Black Belt certificates are 11” x 17” parchment paper and are ONLY available from AKBBA/CSHK Headquarters.

**Higher Dan ranks** are expected to show advanced skills and deeper knowledge of the martial arts (not just a rehash of the 1st Dan material). If you need help in structuring an advanced curriculum, the HDB is more than willing and able to help our Affiliates. Allowances can be made for candidates over the age of 40 and for others with pre-existing medical conditions (i.e. a bad knee or back). It is up to the judging board to determine the extent of the physical aspects of the examination at this point.

- We would like to point out that the Association “certifies” the promotion given by our duly recognized Affiliates. It should be recognized that no High Dan Board signatory is *personally* awarding the promotion unless the candidate is a direct student of that board member. Holders of the AKBBA/CSHK black belt certificate can thus state that they were promoted under the standards and auspices of the Association, NOT that they were promoted to such and such a Dan rank personally by “grandmaster whomever,” unless said grandmaster really IS that individual’s direct teacher of course.

Certifications of **6TH DAN AND HIGHER** are determined solely by the High Dan Board. We make every effort to ensure that the promotion is awarded by the individual’s instructor but we acknowledge that for some high-ranking practitioners, their original instructor has passed away or is otherwise no longer involved in the martial arts. In cases like this we request a comprehensive resume (showing significant contributions since your last promotion) and letters of recommendation. You must have been a member in good standing of the AKBBA/CSHK for at least two years before you submit your “Application for High-Dan Promotion” (which is available at [www.akbba.com](http://www.akbba.com)). An outline of the performance recommendations can be found on this application. After a thorough review (allow up to 8 weeks after you send in all the materials on the Application for High-Dan Promotion) and a subsequent vote of the Board that a certification/promotion is warranted, at least one member of the High Dan Board, and preferably more, must be present on the examination/presentation board. 6th Dan and higher certificates are on 16” x 20” heavy parchment paper and contain HDB signatures and official Association seals and chops (the same previous stipulations for Association sanctioned certifications apply). There is an honorarium charge of \$50 for each HDB member attending a promotions ceremony. In addition, if travel of more than 100 total miles is involved there should be an extra donation for expenses incurred. These should be discussed with the board member well in ADVANCE of the event. Honorariums are in addition to Certification fees.

## 7. Time in Grade+Fees

Although this varies with each system and its ranking structure we have suggested time in grade requirements for black belt ranking. Remember the minimum time in grade for AKBBA/CSHK 1st Dan certification is three years.

Rank	Time in Grade	Minimum Total Time in Training	Certification Fee (includes certificate and postage)
2nd Dan	2 years after 1st Dan	= 5 years (assuming 3 years to 1st)	\$40 (\$60 US / outside of the USA) 11 X 17 certificate
3rd Dan	3 years after 2nd Dan	= 8 years	\$50 (\$70 outside USA) 11 X 17 certificate
4th Dan	4 years after 3rd Dan	= 12 years	\$60 (\$80 outside USA) 11 X 17 certificate
5th Dan	5 years after 4th Dan	= 17 years	\$70 (\$90 outside USA) 11 X 17 certificate
6th Dan	5 years after 5th Dan	= 22 years	\$90 (\$110 outside USA) 16 X 20 heavy certificate
7th Dan	5 years after 6th Dan	= 27 years	\$100 (\$120 outside USA) 16 X 20 heavy certificate
8th Dan	5 years after 7th Dan	= 32 years	\$120 (\$140 outside USA) 16 X 20 heavy certificate
9th Dan	5 years after 8th Dan, with 37 years in training and at least 50 years of age		16 X 20 heavy certificate
10th Dan	5 years after 9th Dan, with 42 years in training and at least 55 years of age		16 X 20 heavy certificate

*No certificate will be presented unless all fees and honorariums are paid.*

Beyond the rank of 3rd Dan, total time in grade can become more important in determining eligibility for rank advancement than the actual time between ranks. The High Dan Board carefully considers the content and quality of the skills and character reflected in an individual’s total martial arts history. In other words, someone may be certified as a 5th Dan and then be certified as a 6th Dan after only a couple of years because their TOTAL time in rank exceeds their Dan level. Again, this is at the sole discretion of the HDB. It is rare for the HDB to skip people in rank.

## **8. Ninth and Tenth Dan Black Belt**

In the AKBBA/CSHK, and in most other systems, the **9TH AND 10TH DAN** are “honorary” or “positional” ranks. These highest ranks are awarded exclusively by vote of the High Dan Board based on a long tenure and exceptional accomplishments in the martial arts and to this Association. They may be awarded to Affiliates of the Association who are over 50 years of age and have in excess of 40 years training and long and distinguished service to the martial arts AND to this Association. A complete and comprehensive resume is expected well in advance of the presentation and we will be soliciting the advice of our emeritus members for ranks of this stature. These certifications are presented at a formal ceremony (i.e. a testing for lower Dan ranks, a tournament, or banquet). As an additional note: the Association does not award formal titles such as “Hanshi” or “Kwan Jang Nim.”

For information not covered here contact:  
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