THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

FACULTY OF ARTS

Centre of Buddhist Studies

Master of Buddhist Counselling

Capstone Experience Guidelines and Important Notes

The purpose of the Capstone Experience is to integrate knowledge and skills acquired as prescribed in the MBC curriculum. All options offered in the Experience are there to enhance students' ability to integrate Buddhist knowledge, apply Buddhist counselling skills to self and/or others, understand the importance of Buddhist values, enhance writing and/or oral communication skills, and demonstrate self-awareness. Each student will choose an option that best fits one's career aspirations and will be assigned a supervisor who will meet with the student regularly and give guidance in the process of the Capstone Experience. The number of hours of student learning activities (including both contact hours and all other forms of student learning activities) ranges from 240 to 360 hours and contact hours will be in a range of 10 to 25 hours. There are four options.

Guidelines

The following guidelines are designed to facilitate the Capstone Experience process. Students can adapt the guidelines according to the supervisors' specific requirements, the students' educational needs, and the actual situations.

Option A: Contemplative and religious practices in Buddhism

With approval from the supervisor, students will participate in one intensive and structured Buddhist practice as an in-depth contemplative experience. Students choosing participation in ritual practices are required to take *BSTC7607 Buddhist liturgy and rituals* as one of the elective courses.

In this Capstone Experience project, the student is expected to:

1. Discuss his/her intended practice and reasons for having chosen the option with the supervisor.
2. Collaboratively identify a practice with the supervisor.

3. Participate in the chosen practice with commitment and devotion.
4. Conduct research on the significance, historical background, and values embedded in the Buddhist practice using reliable academic resources.
5. Complete a Capstone Experience project paper (6,000 to 8,000-words) which
    a. follows the guidelines on the presentation of Capstone Experience;
    b. describes the Buddhist contemplative and religious practice in detail;
    c. explains the significance of the practice with in-depth analysis of Buddhist teachings, traditions, and values embedded in the practice;
    d. articulates the student's learning and personal growth, self-awareness and spiritual formation, and demonstrate reflective learning in relation to the Buddhist practice.

Option B: A self-contemplative and reflective autobiography

In this option, Buddhist counselling students will use self-awareness and self-reflection as a means to develop self-understanding by writing an autobiography guided by the framework of Buddhist teachings and practices. For example, students can describe their own insights regarding their attachment to past experiences, how their defilements impair their daily life by dragging them away from the present moment, and how a consistent meditation practice helps them gain wisdom to diminish suffering. A general assumption is that the efficacy of a Buddhist counsellor is directly proportionate to one's level of self-awareness and self-cultivation. Hence, Buddhist counselling students should be the first one to benefit from the practice of Buddhist counselling, thereby increasing the confidence and understanding of this model of healing. Therefore, the goal of the capstone project is to help students incorporate all the learning materials in the MBC programme into their personal and professional growth by being ones' own clients. Supervisors will use their own expertise in Buddhist practices and/or counselling knowledge to guide students on a tailor-made path of cultivation. Students who opt to use Dharma Therapy and/or Awareness Training Program as their treatment plans are required to take *BSTC7603 Dharma Therapy* and/or *BSTC7604 Awareness Training Program*.

In this Capstone Experience project, the student is expected to:
1. Openly discuss and identify one core personal problem or concern as the focus of treatment.

2. Propose a self-treatment plan using Buddhist counselling knowledge and skills acquired in the programme and seek feedback from the supervisor.

3. Participate in the assigned treatment plan and continuously reflect on the process.

4. Complete a 6,000 to 8,000-word Capstone Experience project paper which

   a. describes the student's chosen problem and relevant background;

   b. introduces the treatment plan and its rationale;

   c. conducts an analysis of the dukkha;

   d. delineates how different conditions and attachments give rise to the dukkha;

   e. describes the process of applying Buddhist teachings and practices to alleviate suffering;

   f. discusses insights and self-knowledge gained in this experience.

Option C*: Buddhist homiletics*

Students who take this option will present two 1-hour talks or equivalent on a specific topic in Buddhism to a target group of audience. In other words, students need to summarize what they have learnt in the programme and prepare to deliver a discourse on a chosen topic with accuracy and skillfulness. Working closely with the supervisor, students will identify appropriate styles and methods to carry out their homiletics, taking into account their strengths and weaknesses in the area. Students will write the presentation, give the presentation in an approved setting, video-record the presentation, and collect feedback from the audience in a written format. This Capstone Experience project involves strong skills in delivering talks and advanced communication skills. Students choosing this option are required to take *BSTC7606 Buddhist Homiletics: The Art of Presenting Buddhist Teachings* as one of the elective courses.

In this Capstone Experience project, the student is expected to:

1. propose and discuss a specific topic of homiletics with the supervisor.

2. Intensively review academic resources on the chosen topic.

3. Identify target audience and organize the homiletics presentation.

4. Prepare feedback form.

5. Submit proposal for ethical approval with all necessary supporting documents.

6. Formulate a script of homiletics and discuss with the supervisor.

7. Give a presentation to academic fellow students and supervisor to collect feedback

before the actual presentation of the talk.

8. Deliver the homiletics, record the process, and collect feedback from participants and supervisor.

9. Submit the Capstone Experience project that includes:

   a. a reflection paper (less than 2,000 words) about the experiences informed by audience feedback;

   b. the written form of the presentation script;

   c. completed feedback forms from the audience;

   d. video-recording of the presentation.

   e. for those who do NOT use English to present the talk, English transcription is required to be submitted.

Presentation script refers to the preparation notes that students have done before they present their Dharma talks. If the script is largely based on the powerpoint, students are required to change it into a word document and submit any other notes that they have prepared for their talk, including those that are not shown in the powerpoint. Students may also enclose the powerpoint document that they have used for their presentation as an appendix if they think it would be helpful for the examiner to assess their project. For those who do not use English to present their talk, a transcription of the talk should also be submitted apart from the presentation script. The transcription is a text document of the oral presentation, and it should be translated into English if the presentation is delivered in another language. Every sentence said by the presenter in the presentation should be transcribed (and translated into English).

Suggested timeline	Task
1st & 2nd month Dec, Jan	• Review academic resources intensively • Discuss the title, outline and conceptual framework of the talk with your supervisor
2nd & 3rd month Jan, Feb	• Seek advice and comments from your supervisor to prepare and apply for ethical approval
4th Month March	• Preparation for the talk, including 　- write the script 　- give a presentation to academic fellow students and supervisor to collect feedback before the actual presentation of the talk

Suggested timeline	Task
5th & 6th month April & May	• Deliver the talk to your target audience • Collect feedback from audience and supervisor • Conduct data analysis and transcription
7th month June	• Complete first draft of final project and collect feedback from supervisor
8th month July	• Submit final project

Option D: Buddhist counselling case study

Students who are practicing as helping professionals (e.g., psychologists, social workers, counsellors, etc.) can apply the knowledge and skills learned from the curriculum to conduct a case study of a client through the provision of individual counselling. To ensure confidentiality, all identifying information of the project should be removed. Students who opt to use Dharma Therapy are required to take *BSTC7603 Dharma Therapy* as one of the elective courses.

In this Capstone Experience project, the student is expected to:
1. Provide all necessary documents to verify his/her professional qualifications and viable practice setting.
2. Submit proposal for ethical approval with all necessary supporting documents.
3. Identify a client and discuss with the supervisor on the appropriateness in having chosen such a client for Buddhist counselling.
4. Propose a treatment plan for the client based on a particular Buddhist counselling model and seek the supervisor's feedback to improve the treatment plan.
5. Provide Buddhist counselling services and document the client's response, problems encountered, and insights gained during the process.
6. Discuss any difficulties in delivering counselling and other related matters with the supervisor when needed.
7. Submit the Capstone Experience project as a 6,000 to 8,000-word paper in which the student will use a Buddhist perspective to conceptualize the client's psychological disturbances, describe the application of Buddhist counselling skills and responses of the client, and reflect on the process of counselling.

Both full-time and part-time students should submit the output of the Capstone Experience

project on or before **July 31** in the final academic year of their studies.

Important Dates and Notes

1. Capstone Experience Proposal

    - Students submit both hard and soft copies[(1)] of the Capstone Experience project proposal by **Nov 1**.

    - Proposal for Capstone Experience will be considered by the MBC Programme Committee; the result will be announced in December. Students may be required to make changes in their proposal upon recommendation of the said committee.

2. Supervision

    - Students are expected to take initiative to meet with their supervisors from time to time.

    - Individual or/and group supervisions are viable options to facilitate students' learning.

    - Supervisors will fill in the supervision log to document meeting sessions for each student. The supervisor will submit the supervision log to the MBC Capstone Experience Coordinator after completion of the supervision.

3. Approval of Final Capstone Experience Project Title

    - Students are required to submit and seek approval from the MBC Programme Chairman to approve their final Capstone Experience project titles by **March 8**.

    - Before the submission, students need to discuss with and seek the approval from their supervisors. **An approval letter or email** from supervisor should be provided when submitting the project title at Moodle.

    - **KIND REMINDER about the title**:
        - Please do not add the punctuation full stop (.) at the end of title.

            ☒   The Development and Evaluation of a Group-Based Mahāyāna Buddhist Intervention — Awareness Training Program.

        - Please do not add the punctuation open and close quotation marks ("") at the beginning and at the end of title.

            ☒   "The Development and Evaluation of a Group-Based Mahāyāna

- If you are going to have the name of the sutra in your title, please capitalize all the first letter of the name of sutra.

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  ☒ Facing death and fear through studying the heart sutra
  ☒ Facing death and fear through studying the Heart sutra

- Please provide your title in English only.

  ☒ Facing death and fear through studying the Heart Sutra 讀懂心經以面對死亡與恐懼

- Please italics foreign terms that have not yet entered common parlance
  E.g. ., Skt. *śūnyatā*; Pali: *suññatā*; Tib. *stong pa nyid*

- Name of places, names of people, and categories are NOT italicized
  E.g. Mahāyāna

- For **Pāli** and **Sanskrit** terms always use diacritics
  E.g. Pāli *pañña*; Skt. *Prajñā*   *Amitāyurdhyāna Sūtra*

• For those who have applied for the ethical approval, please ensure that your title submitted in April 29 is **exactly the same** as the one you have submitted for ethical approval.

• After getting this approved title from the supervisor and MBC Programme Chairman, the title shown on the abstract of the final Capstone Experience project must be **EXACTLY THE SAME** as the approved title, including capitalization, italicization, punctuation and use of special characters (please see the *Guidelines on the Presentation of Capstone Experience*).

For example, a student has submitted the following title:

The Development and Evaluation of a Group-Based Mahāyāna Buddhist Intervention — Awareness Training Program (ATP)

An identical title should appear in the abstract of the final Capstone Experience project to fulfil the requirement:

☑ The Development and Evaluation of a Group-Based Mahāyāna Buddhist Intervention — Awareness Training Program (ATP)

The following are some of the examples that do **NOT** fulfil the requirement:

☒ THE DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION OF A GROUP-BASED MAHĀYĀNA BUDDHIST INTERVENTION — AWARENESS TRAINING PROGRAM (ATP)

☒ *The Development and Evaluation of a Group-Based Mahāyāna Buddhist Intervention — Awareness Training Program (ATP)*

☒ The Development and Evaluation of a Group-Based Mahāyāna Buddhist Intervention — Awareness Training Program

☒ The Development and Evaluation of a Group-Based Mahāyāna Buddhist Intervention — Awareness Training Program [ATP]

☒ The Development and Evaluation of a Group-based Mahāyāna Buddhist Intervention — Awareness Training Program (ATP)

☒ The Development and Evaluation of a Group-Based Mahayana Buddhist Intervention — Awareness Training Program (ATP)

☒ The development and evaluation of a group-based Mahayana Buddhist Intervention — Awareness Training Program (ATP)

☒ The development and evaluation of a group-based Mahayana Buddhist Intervention — Awareness Training Programme (ATP)

☒ The Development and Evaluation of a Group-Based Mahāyāna Buddhist Intervention: Awareness Training Program (ATP)

☒ Development and Evaluation of a Group-Based Mahāyāna Buddhist Intervention — Awareness Training Program (ATP)

☒ The Development And evaluation of Awareness Training Program

- Students are required to seek approval from their supervisors as well as the MBC Programme Chairman for any amendment(s) of an approved title.

4. Ethical Approval for Data Collection

- Projects that involve collecting new data from human participants and/or using pre-existing personal data[2] are subject to ethical clearance. Students should submit an application for ethical approval, with endorsement of their supervisors, to the Programme Chairperson.

- Collection of new data from human participants covers all forms of collection process, e.g. experimental procedures/retreatment/intervention, focus group, telephone/internet survey, observation, personal interviews, or self-administered questionnaire, etc. Usage of pre-existing data refers to retrieving readily available personal data from existing documents/records for secondary analysis, irrespective of whether or not the data are publicly available[3], whether or not the data originally collected are intentionally for research purpose, and whether the personal data from existing documents/records will be extracted for secondary analysis. For example, using students' assignments for research analysis means to use pre-existing data from a private source that were originally collected for non-research purposes. The minimum retention period for research data and records is three years after publication or public release of the research to ensure that there are no problems with consent, fabrication and falsification.

- Students should make sure that such ethical approval has been obtained prior to any data collection/analysis taking place. It is recommended that the capstone proposal is to be submitted together with all necessary supporting documents **at least six weeks** before data collection.

- Failure to obtain necessary ethical approval may require recollection of data. The case may also be referred to the Chairman of the University Research Committee for possible disciplinary action if necessary.

- Students are required to report to the Programme Chairperson any amendments and new information on the project. Any deviation from the study protocol or compliance incident that has occurred during a study and may adversely affect the rights, safety or well-being of any participant or breaches of confidentiality should be reported to the Programme Chairperson within 15 calendar days from the first awareness of the deviation/incident by the student. Students may also be required to submit a final completion report upon request of the Programme Chairperson or the Faculty.

- Application form for ethical approval for taught postgraduate students in the Arts Faculty can be downloaded from
  ethical-approval-application-form.docx (live.com)
- Students should read the HKU Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) "Operational Guidelines and Procedures" (http://www.rss.hku.hk/HREC/guidelines.pdf) before they fill in the application form for ethical approval. For more information, please visit the website of the Human Research Ethics Committee at http://www.rss.hku.hk/integrity/ethics-compliance/hrec.
- Copies of full research proposal including any questionnaire and/or interview script and informed consent form should be enclosed to the completed application form and submitted to the Programme Chairperson for consideration.
- Starting from 1 October, 2021, all staff members and students (including undergraduates, taught postgraduates and research postgraduates) who are PI of a research project that involves artefacts should observe the Code of Practice for Ethical Vetting of Research Projects Involving Artefacts and obtain ethics approval from the HREC direct prior to any data collection/analysis taking place. If the research project involves both human participants and artefacts, two separate applications should be submitted to the Programme Chairperson and the HREC respectively. Please also refer to the HREC website for details.
- Students are **strongly recommended to attend the workshop** on how to prepare the application of ethical approval organized by our Centre and read the useful tips that we have provided before their applications.

5. Output and Submission of Capstone Experience Project
   - **IMPORTANT:** Review and follow the "**Guidelines on the Presentation of Capstone Experience**" (please see another Word document at Moodle). These guidelines are for proper formatting of the presentation of the project. It provides a checklist for including the basic elements of a project and the required order of presentation. A template for the *Abstract*, *Title Page*, and *Declaration* is also provided.
   - Referencing: It is important for students to include proper referencing and citation. Two booklets distributed via the University's website are about the importance of academic honesty and ways to avoid plagiarism: "https://tl.hku.hk/plagiarism/".

Students could also refer to the website of Faculty of Arts:
" https://arts.hku.hk/current-students/postgraduate/taught-postgraduate/assessment--examination-and-award-of-distinction". Please read carefully. As stated in Regulation 6 of the University's Regulations Governing Students' Academic Conduct Concerning Assessment, **NO engagement of plagiarism is allowed. Students who fail to make a full declaration and proper citation according to the course requirements may face disciplinary action.** For the GenAI policy, please visit: https://tl.hku.hk/plagiarism/genai-and-plagiarism/.

For the citation format, please use Chicago, MLA or APA. Students are strongly recommended to visit the HKU library website (https://lib.hku.hk/) to read the relevant materials (e.g. https://lib.hku.hk/general/instruction/course_materials.html; https://lib.hku.hk/endnote/index.html; https://libguides.lib.hku.hk/c.php?g=934554&p=6763997) and attend the relevant workshops (https://lib.hku.hk/general/instruction/index.html), e.g. Postgraduate Library Workshop, Turnitin Seminar for RPG Students. Relevant materials provided in the "Workshop on Essay Writing and Information Searching Skills" offered by our Centre are also highly recommended.

- Students should submit both hard and soft copies[1] of their output of the Capstone Experience project on or before **July 31** for plagiarism checking and AI detection by Turnitin as well as for assessment.

- Marks will be deducted for late submission. For any late submission within first 7 days after the deadline, one sub-grade will be deducted (e.g. A → A-); From the 8th day after the deadline and thereafter, one grade will be deducted (e.g. A→ B).

- For the submission of soft copies, if you have multiple files, please combine them into one single file before you upload it to Moodle. Students could upload their files in WORD or PDF format. For students who have multiple files in different formats and do not know how to combine them into one single PDF file, here are some references.

  - To convert WORD file to PDF file, here is a link about "How to Convert Word to PDF"
    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LUPL4_y_HPM

  - To convert EXCEL file to PDF file, here is a link about "How to Convert Excel to PDF"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JUV0NJUIP6g

- To convert POWERPOINT file to PDF file, here is a link about "Save PowerPoint presentations as PDF files"
https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/save-powerpoint-presentations-as-pdf-files-9b5c786b-9c6e-4fe6-81f6-9372f77c47c8

- For students who are using adobe, here are two links that teach you how to combine multiple PDF files into one PDF file.
https://helpx.adobe.com/document-cloud/help/combine-files-pdf.html
https://helpx.adobe.com/hk_zh/acrobat/how-to/combine-files-into-pdf.html

- For students who are not using adobe, you could google the following key words "pdf combiner", there are lots of free online software are available for you to combine multiple PDF files. Here are some:
https://www.ilovepdf.com/merge_pdf
https://combinepdf.com/
https://smallpdf.com/merge-pdf

- For those who choose option C: Buddhist homiletics, you are required to submit
    a. a reflection paper about the experience of the presentation after receiving feedback from the audience;
    b. the written form of the presentation script (please submit it in Word or pdf format);
    c. completed feedback forms from the audience;
    d. video-recording of the presentation;
    e. for those who do NOT use English to present the talk, English transcription is required to be submitted.

Please submit item (a), (b), (c) and (e) at Moodle.

For item (d), the video-recording of the presentation, student would not be able to submit your assignment via attached files at Moodle as the video file size exceeds the allowable attachment limit. A **video link** of the presentation should be

included in your project when submitting at Moodle **and email** this video link to mbccapstone@hku.hk.

Here are two feasible options that you may consider to save your file online and create a video link:

(i) Send files via a cloud storage service. Students could upload their video recording at HKU Microsoft OneDrive and create sharable link in OneDrive. Please ensure that you have given the access right and permission for the MBC Capstone Experience Coordinator and the examiner to view. For your easy reference, here are some useful tips on how to use Microsoft OneDrive.
https://its.hku.hk/kb/setup-procedure-for-microsoft-onedrive-on-microsoft-windows-for-students/
https://its.hku.hk/kb/setup-onedrive-on-iphone-ipad/
https://its.hku.hk/kb/share-files-in-onedrive-and-link-to-moodle/#:~:text=Share%20the%20file%20link%20in%20Moodle%20Go%20to,Return%20to%20course%20%E2%80%9D%20to%20save%20the%20settings

(ii) Send files via youtube. Student could upload the video on youtube and set the video privacy setting to Private or Unlisted. The youtube video link could then be stated in your project paper. For your easy reference, here is a website that provides some useful tips on how to upload a video on youtube.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2JlQIZFeUV0
https://www.youtube.com/upload

- For those who choose Option D Buddhist Mediation, please also submit a **video link** of the video recording should be **included in your project** when submitting at Moodle **and email** this video link to mbccapstone@hku.hk.

6. Assessment
   - The examiner will consider the following aspects when assessing student's Capstone Experience project.
     - Presentation and reference format, adequate use of references

- Depth of discussion and analysis
- Depth of self-reflection and self-cultivation
- Participation and responsibility

7. Enquiries about the Capstone Experience

- Please contact your supervisor or Dr. Bonnie Wu, the Capstone Experience Coordinator (mbccapstone@hku.hk) if you need further information.

Notes

(1) Hard copy should be submitted to the assignment drop box at our Centre (please put into the box of "MBC Capstone Experience") outside Room 4.02, 4/F, Jockey Club Tower, Centennial Campus. The soft copy should be uploaded to Moodle of BSTC8998 Capstone Experience.

(2) As defined by the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance, "personal data" means any data (a) relating directly or indirectly to a living individual; and (b) from which it is practicable for the identity of the individual to be directly or indirectly ascertained; and in a form in which access to or processing of the data is practicable.

(3) "Publicly available" means that the general public can obtain the data. Sources are not considered "publicly available" if access to the data is limited to researchers.