

**REGULATIONS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF BUDDHIST COUNSELLING  
(MBC)**

*These Regulations apply to candidates admitted to the Master of Buddhist Counselling curriculum in the academic year 2022-23 and thereafter.*

*(See also General Regulations and Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Curricula)*

Any publication based on work approved for a higher degree should contain a reference to the effect that the work was submitted to The University of Hong Kong for the award of the degree.

---

**Admission requirements**

**MBC 1.**

To be eligible for admission to the courses leading to the Master of Buddhist Counselling, candidates

- (a) shall comply with the General Regulations;
  - (b) shall comply with the Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Curricula;
  - (c) shall hold
    - (i) a Bachelor's degree of this University; or
    - (ii) a qualification of equivalent standard from this University or another comparable institution accepted for this purpose;
  - (d) shall have satisfactorily completed BSTC6079 Early Buddhism and BSTC6002 Mahayana Buddhism in the Master of Buddhist Studies curriculum, or courses of Buddhist studies offered by another comparable institution accepted for this purpose; and
  - (e) shall satisfy the examiners in a qualifying examination if required.
- 

**Qualifying examination**

**MBC 2.**

- (a) A qualifying examination may be set to test the candidates' formal academic ability or their ability to follow the courses of study prescribed. It shall consist of one or more written papers or their equivalent, and may include a project report or dissertation.
  - (b) Candidates who are required to satisfy the examiners in a qualifying examination shall not be permitted to register until they have satisfied the examiners in the examination.
- 

**Advanced standing**

**MBC 3.**

In accordance with TPG 3 of the Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Curricula, Advanced Standing may be granted to candidates in recognition of studies completed successfully before admission to the curriculum. The amount of credits to be granted for Advanced Standing shall be determined by the Board of the Faculty, in accordance with the following principles:

- (a) Candidates who can produce evidence, including but not limited to transcript and course syllabus,

that a course taken elsewhere is equivalent in contents to any one of the three compulsory core courses can apply for Advanced Standing.

- (b) Advanced Standing will only be granted to one core course at maximum.
  - (c) Advanced Standing will only be considered if the previous studies were done within 5 years before admission to the curriculum.
  - (d) Advanced Standing will not be granted for elective courses and capstone experience.
  - (e) Credits granted for Advanced Standing shall not normally be included in the calculation of the GPA unless permitted by the Board of the Faculty but will be recorded on the transcript of the candidate.
- 

### **Award of degree**

MBC 4.

To be eligible for the award of the degree of Master of Buddhist Counselling, candidates shall

- (a) comply with the General Regulations;
  - (b) comply with the Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Curricula; and
  - (c) complete the curriculum as prescribed in the syllabuses and satisfy the examiners in accordance with the regulations as set out below.
- 

### **Period of study**

MBC 5.

The curriculum shall normally extend over one academic year of full-time study or two academic years of part-time study. Candidates shall not be permitted to extend their studies beyond the maximum period of registration of two academic years of full-time study or four academic years of part-time study, unless otherwise permitted or required by the Board of the Faculty.

---

### **Completion of curriculum**

MBC 6.

To complete the curriculum, candidates

- (a) shall satisfy the requirements prescribed in TPG 6 of the Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Curricula;
  - (b) shall follow courses of instruction and complete satisfactorily all prescribed written work;
  - (c) shall complete and present a satisfactory capstone experience as set out in MBC 7; and
  - (d) shall satisfy the examiners in all prescribed courses and in any prescribed form of assessment.
- 

### **Capstone experience**

MBC 7.

The capstone experience project is compulsory and can be conducted in the following forms:

- (a) Contemplative and religious practices in Buddhism;
- (b) A self-contemplative and reflective autobiography;
- (c) Buddhist homiletics; or

- (d) Buddhist counselling case study.

Title of the capstone experience project should be submitted for approval on a date set by the Centre. Candidates shall submit a statement that the project output represents their own work undertaken after registration as candidates for the degree.

---

### **Assessment**

#### **MBC 8.**

- (a) Grades shall be awarded in accordance with TPG 9(a) of the Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Curricula. Only passed courses will earn credits.
  - (b) Where so prescribed in the syllabuses, coursework shall constitute part or whole of the assessment for one or more courses.
  - (c) An assessment of candidates' coursework during their studies may be taken into account in determining their result in each written examination paper; or, where so prescribed in the syllabuses, may constitute part or whole of the assessment of one or more courses.
  - (d) There shall be no appeal against the results of examinations and all other forms of assessment.
- 

#### **MBC 9.**

Candidates who have failed to satisfy the examiners on their first attempt in not more than two courses to be examined, whether by means of written examination papers or coursework assessment, during any of the academic year of study, may be permitted

- (a) to present themselves for re-examination in the course or courses of failure, with or without repeating any part of the curriculum, on a specified date; or
  - (b) to re-submit their work for the course or courses of failure for re-assessment within a specified period, but no later than the end of the following semester (not including the summer semester); or
  - (c) for elective courses, to take another course in lieu and satisfy the assessment requirements.
- 

#### **MBC 10.**

Subject to the provisions of Regulation MBC 7, candidates who have failed to present a satisfactory output in the capstone experience project may be permitted to submit a new or revised project output within a specified period.

---

### **Supplementary examination**

#### **MBC 11.**

Candidates who are unable because of illness to be present for one or more papers in any written examination may apply for permission to present themselves at a supplementary examination to be held before the beginning of the following academic year. Any such application shall be made on a form prescribed within seven calendar days of the first day of the candidates' absence from the examination.

---

### **Discontinuation of studies**

#### **MBC 12.**

Candidates who

- (a) are not permitted to present themselves for re-examination/re-submission in any written examination or coursework assessment in which they have failed to satisfy the examiners or to revise and re-present their project outputs in the capstone experience; or
- (b) have failed to satisfy the examiners on second attempt in any coursework assessment or examination or in their project outputs in the capstone experience; or
- (c) have failed more than two courses on the first attempt in an academic year; or
- (d) have exceeded the maximum period of registration as specified in MBC 5

may be required to discontinue their studies under the provisions of General Regulation G 12.

---

### **Assessment results**

MBC 13.

On successful completion of the curriculum, candidates who have shown exceptional merit may be awarded a mark of distinction, and this mark shall be recorded in the candidates' degree diplomas.

---

## **SYLLABUSES FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF BUDDHIST COUNSELLING (MBC)**

*These Syllabuses apply to candidates admitted to the Master of Buddhist Counselling curriculum in the academic year 2022-23 and thereafter.*

---

### **1. PURPOSE**

The programme aims at providing students with the fundamental knowledge and skills required for Buddhist teaching-based counselling. Its purpose is to lay a stronger foundation to serve the society at large by professionally training Buddhist chaplains to offer Buddhist counselling services. The programme offers an interdisciplinary curriculum that focuses on the study of a variety of applied Buddhist and psychological knowledge while simultaneously cultivating students' spiritual formation. During each course, students will be encouraged to develop knowledge of, skills for, and experiences in a given subject and apply them in a contemporary psychosocial environment.

### **2. CURRICULUM DURATION**

The curriculum shall normally extend over one academic year of full-time study or two academic years of part-time study.

### **3. CURRICULUM STRUCTURE**

All courses are offered on a credit basis. Candidates must complete eight courses by selecting three compulsory core courses, four elective courses, and one course for capstone experience. Candidates have to complete a total of 63 credits for graduation. It should be noted that the option of a limited number of online or hybrid mode courses may be introduced from time to time. Such options will not necessarily be offered every year, nor for all courses.

### 1. Core Courses (9 credits each)

- BSTC7600. Theories and practice in Buddhist counselling I  
 BSTC7601. Theories and practice in Buddhist counselling II  
 BSTC7602. Spiritual formation through contemplative practices

### 2. Elective Courses (6 credits each)

- BSTC6055. Buddhist psychology I  
 BSTC7603. Dharma therapy  
 BSTC7604. Awareness training program  
 BSTC7605. Being with the elderly, sick and dying  
 BSTC7606. Buddhist homiletics: The art of presenting Buddhist teachings  
 BSTC7607. Buddhist liturgy and rituals  
 BSTC7608. Buddhist meditation  
 BSTC7609. Special topics in Buddhist counselling (1)  
 BSTC7610. Special topics in Buddhist counselling (2)  
 BSTC7611. Group work in Buddhist and traditional counselling

### 3. Capstone Experience (12 credits)

- BSTC8998. Capstone Experience

Not all elective courses listed above will necessarily be offered each year.

Students from the MBC programme will be provided with options to select elective courses from the Master of Social Sciences (Counselling) programme. Teachers from the Master of Social Sciences (Counselling) programme may also serve as the co-supervisor in the Capstone Experience if the area of study is relevant. The selection of cross-listed courses and co-supervision of Capstone Experience should be subject to the approval of the Programme Director/Chairman of the two respective programmes. Please contact the MBC Programme Office for details.

## 4. SYLLABUSES

### A. Core Courses

#### **BSTC7600. Theories and practice in Buddhist counselling I (9 credits)**

This course provides students with basic knowledge and experiences in Buddhist teachings-based counselling and helping skills. Using fundamental Buddhist teachings such as the Four Noble Truths, Noble Eightfold Path, Dependently Co-arising, and Non-Self as framework, students will be introduced to the Buddhist understandings of human nature and suffering. Theories and practices of classical counselling interventions and practices will also be introduced so that students can see the similarities and differences between Western psychotherapy and Buddhist counselling. Through lectures, class discussions, role playing, and other experiential learning activities, students will acquire a wide range of Buddhist counselling skills, such as compassionate engagement within therapeutic relationships, deep listening, reflection of meanings, and development of insight. Based on the ethical standards of the Association of Professional Chaplains and the Buddhist ethics, this course also introduces students to ethical decision making including an awareness of ethical issues, knowledge about what constitutes an ethical dilemma, and an understanding of the steps to take when one encounters an ethical dilemma.

Assessment: 80% coursework and 20% examination

---

**BSTC7601. Theories and practice in Buddhist counselling II (9 credits)**

This course is designed to expand students' knowledge and experience in Buddhist counselling and helping skills by focusing on specific treatment models. Guided by evidenced-based practices in professional psychology and Buddhism, this course introduces students to traditional therapeutic orientations, including cognitive behavioral therapy, client-centered therapy, and personal recovery-oriented approaches as well as Buddhist-derived treatments, including meditation awareness training (MAT), compassion cultivation training (CCT), dharma therapy, awareness training program (ATP), and others. This course is particularly focused on the application of Buddhist-derived treatments in the counselling process. The model of teaching will include lectures, role playing, video demonstrations, and contemplative exercises to help students increase their readiness in utilizing advanced counselling techniques, such as loving-kindness meditation, self- and other-focused compassion, and guiding clients to self-reflect.

Pre-requisite: BSTC7600. Theories and practice in Buddhist counselling I

Assessment: 80% coursework and 20% examination

---

**BSTC7602. Spiritual formation through contemplative practices (9 credits)**

Across the fields of professional psychology and chaplaincy, both the Society for the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality of the American Psychological Association and the Association of Professional Chaplains emphasize the importance of spirituality in human psychology, promote the incorporation of spirituality into clinical settings in accordance with academic research, and foster constructive dialogue between psychology and religion. In alignment with these organizations' support of the importance of the spiritual quality of Buddhist counsellors, this course aims to cultivate the necessary spiritual competencies required for professional spiritual care through an introspective approach in which students deepen their personal practice and hone their approach to Buddhist counselling. In particular, students will have a deeper awareness of their attachments, gain insight into the relationship between their spiritual well-being and defilements, cultivate loving kindness and compassion for self and others, and foster their skillful means through Buddhist practices such as precepts study and meditation. The model of teaching for this course will include lectures, group discussions, and contemplative exercises.

Assessment: 80% coursework and 20% examination

---

**B. Elective Courses**

---

**BSTC6055. Buddhist psychology I (6 credits)**

This course takes a psychological perspective to introduce Buddhism as a moral and psychologically healthy way of life. The early Buddhist way of life as practiced by the Buddha and his disciples is introduced through selected readings from English translations of the original Pali texts Majjhima Nikaya and Anguttara Nikaya. This source is chosen over other more theoretically oriented secondary sources on the belief that the early Buddhist way of life provided the experiential (and empirical) basis for Buddhist philosophy. The narrative format offers lively and concrete examples of problem solving in daily life that are easily understood by most readers and more importantly- less readily misunderstood. Theories and important concepts in Buddhism are introduced later in the course to bind together the rather loosely

organized teachings of the Nikaya texts. Finally, the epistemological foundation of Buddhism is introduced through selected readings from the Yogacara tradition (in particular the Thirty Stanzas) and compared with recent developments in theoretical psychology (in particular social constructionism).

Assessment: 50% coursework and 50% examination

---

### **BSTC7603. Dharma therapy (6 credits)**

Dharma therapy is a therapeutic intervention modelled after the Buddha's path to awakening. Its theoretic foundation is built on the Buddhist dharma, the core of Buddhist teachings, together with mindfulness as one of its key components. This course will introduce the theory and structure of the therapy and how these Buddhist interventions to end suffering can be applied in a psychotherapeutic manner by enabling practitioners to better understand their problems in a more realistic and constructive manner.

Pre-requisite: BSTC7600. Theories and practice in Buddhist counselling I

Assessment: 100% coursework

---

### **BSTC7604. Awareness training program (6 credits)**

This is an experiential as well as theoretical course that covers the latest research and theories regarding Buddhist-derived interventions. The main aim of the course is to provide students with knowledge and understanding of the awareness training program, a Mahayana Buddhist teaching-based group intervention for enhancing the ability of participants to handle stress and fostering well-being. Students will participate in introspective exercises, experiential activities, meditation practices, group discussions, and quizzes based on the 7-week awareness training program. They are expected to deepen their experience through home practice and apply their experience to counselling services and their daily lives.

Assessment: 100% coursework

---

### **BSTC7605. Being with the elderly, sick and dying (6 credits)**

What are prominent psychological reactions in the midst of pain and suffering? What is a "good death"? Regarding caregivers, what are helpful responses and what are not? What are healing practices that bring pleasure to both parties? This course offers a Buddhist perspective of the psychology of perception, emotions, and thoughts in response to illness and incapacity, particularly at the end of life. All aspects of dying—the medical, legal, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual—require discussion. The course also aims to provide training that conveys thoughtfulness in interacting with patients, their family, and health care staff in a multi-faith setting. The course comprises lectures, small-group discussions, class exercises, role playing, and seminars on selected topics. Students are expected to perform their own research on basic medical knowledge, such as the symptoms, treatments, and prognosis of serious illnesses. Therefore, they are required to listen well and having an understanding of details.

Assessment: 100% coursework

---

### **BSTC7606. Buddhist homiletics: The art of presenting Buddhist teachings (6 credits)**

Buddhism has come a long way since the Buddha first turned the wheel of Dharma in Barnes, India, more than 2,500 years ago. This course will examine how Buddhism has evolved and adopted itself to suit the needs, customs, and temperament of different people in different lands. The relevancy of Buddhism in

our time and how to promote it in light of today's social, educational, and political environments will also be explored. Various styles and types of dharma talks are studied and considered. Over the course of interactive sessions, students will hone their skills in preparing and delivering mindful, focused, and inspirational presentations on Buddhist teachings. Each student will be video-recorded delivering a brief speech, followed by a question and answer session and a supportive feedback session.

Assessment: 100% coursework

---

### **BSTC7607. Buddhist liturgy and rituals (6 credits)**

Although many claim (based on a selective reading of canonical Buddhist literature) that the Buddha's "original teaching" involved a rejection of ritual activity, from the very early period and throughout the entire Buddhist history, the Buddhist traditions have adopted indigenous rituals and practices and have devised a great variety of their own rituals. This course provides an introduction to Buddhist ritual practice in different Buddhist tradition to the students who are interested in Buddhist studies. We will begin by exploring several theories and research methods of adopting rituals in anthropology and religious studies. After having grasped the theoretical basis of ritual studies, the students will go further to study the doctrinal, mythic, and other dimensions of Buddhist practice, identify the various sources of ritual power, examine the structural patterns of various rituals, survey the different categories of ceremonies, and analyse the most important groups of rituals, especially different death rituals that are performed to assist the deceased to enable rebirth into the better realms. It will focus on how experiences of ritual site and ritual time will generate meanings that affect individual enlightenment as well as the understanding of Buddhist teaching. As a comparative approach to Buddhist rituals, this course will cover materials such as myths, texts, and video records of rituals. Rituals are studied in some detail by reading ritual texts and conducting fieldwork (or studying rituals by watching video recordings of them) to examine the actual ritual practice.

Assessment: 100% coursework

---

### **BSTC7608. Buddhist mediation (6 credits)**

By integrating the techniques of solution-focused brief therapy and the mediation process with Buddhist theories and practices, the course will teach a model of conflict resolution that reflects the Mahayana ideal of the practice of the Way of Bodhichitta for benefiting oneself and others, to resolve conflicts for oneself and for others, and to learn about the process of change and transformation through applications of the model. Students will acquire basic knowledge of theories and practices of Buddhism and mediation using an integral approach and will apply the appropriate skills to be their own mediator and to mediate other people's disputes in the family context such as for couples and parents and children, in the care of the elderly/sick, and in the probate of a deceased member of the family. The mode of teaching will be by lecture, demonstration by recordings or role plays, role play exercises in small groups, and self-reflective learning.

Assessment: 100% coursework

---

### **BSTC7609. Special topics in Buddhist counselling (1) (6 credits)**

This course is offered from time to time. Students should consult the Centre of Buddhist Studies on the content of the course on offer.

Assessment: 50% coursework and 50% examination

---



**BSTC7610. Special topics in Buddhist counselling (2) (6 credits)**

This course is offered from time to time. Students should consult the Centre of Buddhist Studies on the content of the course on offer.

Assessment: 100% coursework

---

**BSTC7611. Group work in Buddhist and traditional counselling (6 credits)**

This course provides students with fundamental knowledge, techniques, and experiences of group work in Buddhist and traditional counselling. Different group process theories will be introduced so that students can recognize the similarities and differences between Buddhist and traditional counselling. Students will acquire and learn the knowledge and skills in group work through a variety of means, including lectures, videos, group discussions, reflective exercises, role-playing, and other experiential activities. Since the class itself also serves as a group, students will be able to experience and observe the group dynamics and identify some interventions that could enhance their growth and development through this learning platform. Ethical issues that have importance for effective group work will also be discussed with reference to the Code of Ethics for Professional Buddhist Counsellors, such as informed consent, confidentiality, conflicts of values, professional competence, and so on.

Assessment: 100% coursework

---

**C. Capstone Experience****BSTC8998. Capstone Experience (12 credits)**

The capstone experience is designed for the students to demonstrate their competencies as a Buddhist counsellor while participating in a single original supervised project of the student's choice. The purpose of the project is to integrate knowledge and skills acquired, and which are prescribed in the MBC curriculum. In particular, students should demonstrate their depth of Buddhist knowledge, application of Buddhist counselling skills, adherence to Buddhist values, acquisition of communication skills, and enhancement of self-awareness by fulfilling one of the following capstone experience options. All options offered should 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. The title of the project output should be submitted for approval on a date set by the Centre.

*Option A: Contemplative and religious practices in Buddhism*

Contemplative and religious learning and experience are important parts of Buddhist practices both as a means to develop spiritual and religious competency and to acquire the necessary knowledge and experience to assist and provide counselling to clients. There are various forms of Buddhist contemplative and religious practices varying from meditation retreat to more ritualist ceremonies such as Shuilu Fahui (the Buddhist Rite for Deliverance of Creatures of Water and Land). A crucial part of training in Buddhist counselling is to foster spiritual, religious, and cultural competencies in students to enhance their understanding that Buddhist meditation practices and Buddhist rituals could be a form of self-cultivation as well as a form of professional spiritual care.

An in-depth and reflective report of a student's contemplative and religious practices and experiences could be an indication of whether the student can integrate Buddhist knowledge, practices, history, and

rituals into one's learning experience as well as applying them as counselling tools to help others. With approval from faculty and supervisors, students will participate in one Buddhist contemplative and religious practice, such as Buddhist meditation retreats, repentance rituals, or other practices and liturgy. In a 6,000- to 8,000-word paper, students will: (1) describe the Buddhist contemplative and religious practices in detail; (2) explain the significance of the practice with in-depth analysis of the Buddhist teachings, traditions, and values embedded in the practice; and (3) articulate their learning and personal growth, self-awareness and spiritual formation, and demonstrate reflective learning in relation to the Buddhist practice. Students will be required to use academic resources such as research studies and Buddhist scriptures to support their analysis of the Buddhist practices.

Assessment: 100% coursework

Option B: *A self-contemplative and reflective autobiography*

Self-awareness is a crucial component in Buddhist counselling. It is a necessary quality in self-cultivation in which the knowledge and insight of oneself such as seeing one's attachments, noting mental proliferations, and being aware of the causes and conditions contributing to suffering are essential to the practice of Buddhist counselling. When counsellors develop these abilities, they become more effective in helping their clients to do the same. One of the most common ways for counsellors to enhance their level of self-understanding is the continuous process of self-awareness and self-reflection. Due to these reasons, Buddhist counselling students could 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. Under the guidance of a supervisor, the student will: (1) identify one core personal problem, (2) collaboratively design a self-treatment plan with the supervisor, (3) engage in the assigned interventions (e.g. appropriate and structured meditation program, contemplative exercises, seeking professional counseling, self-reflection journals, five aggregate analysis, etc.), and (4) articulate the experiences in an organized autobiography. In this 6,000- to 8,000-word paper, students will describe their problem and relevant background, introduce the treatment plan and its rationale, conduct an analysis of their dukkha, delineate how different conditions and attachments give rise to the dukkha, describe the process of applying Buddhist teachings and practices to alleviate their own suffering, and insights and self-knowledge gained in this experience. For example, students can describe their own insights regarding their attachments to the 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 practice of Buddhist counselling, thereby increasing the confidence and understanding of this model of healing. Therefore, the goal of this capstone project is to help students to incorporate all the learning materials in the MBC programme into their personal and professional growth by being ones' own clients.

Assessment: 100% coursework

Option C: *Buddhist homiletics*

In the history of Buddhism, the Buddha and his disciplines used homiletics as a way of teaching and counselling to help people reduce suffering. Buddhist homiletics is the art of the composition and delivery of a specific Buddhist topic. The presentation and delivery of the Buddhist topic involves advanced and skillful understanding of Buddhist knowledge, skillful usage of Buddhist concepts in didactics presentation, innovative and appropriate translations of Buddhist values, and strong communication skills. 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 their particular strength and weakness to identify the appropriate styles and methods to carry out their homiletic. 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. The deliverable of this capstone experience will be a portfolio consisting of: (1) a reflection paper (less than 2,000 words) about the experiences informed by audience feedback; (2) the written form of the presentation; (3) completed feedback forms from the audience; and (4) video-recording of the presentation. This capstone project involves strong skills in delivering talks and advanced communication skills. Students choosing this option are required to take *Buddhist Homiletics: The Art of Presenting Buddhist Teachings* as one of the elective courses.

Assessment: 100% coursework

Option D: *Buddhist counselling case study*

Students who are practicing as a helping professional (e.g., psychologists, social workers, counsellors, etc.) can apply knowledge and skills learned from the curriculum to conduct a case study of a client. In a 6,000- to 8,000-word paper, students 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. To protect the client's confidentiality, all identifying information of the project should be removed.

Assessment: 100% coursework