

**THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG**  
**FACULTY OF ARTS**

**Master of Buddhist Counselling**

**CREDIT UNIT STATEMENT**

The Master of Buddhist Counselling programme aims at providing students with the fundamental knowledge and skills required for Buddhist teaching-based counselling. Its purpose is to lay a strong foundation to serve the society at large by professionally training students to offer Buddhist counselling services and meet the demands of the clinical world. 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.

There are three different types of courses: 1) core courses; 2) elective courses; and 3) capstone experience. Core courses are worth 9 credits, elective courses are worth 6 credits, and the capstone experience is worth 12 credits. The number of hours for student learning activities (including both contact hours and all other forms of student learning activities) range from 120 to 180 hours for a 6-credit course to 180 to 270 hours for a 9-credit course. Contact hours range from 36 to 48 hours for both 6-credit and 9-credit courses, except for the capstone experience.

Assessment items and tasks may include quizzes, role playing, video demonstrations, contemplative practices, assignments, projects, presentations, class participation, essays, and examinations. Students will be asked to demonstrate skills in Buddhist counselling, communication, self-awareness, and reflection, as well as contemplative skills, presentation skills, research techniques, and the abilities to integrate and apply Buddhist knowledge in counselling, health care, educational, and other related settings.

**1. Core Courses (9 credits)**

It is essential for Buddhist counsellors to have proficient knowledge of and skills in Buddhist teaching and psychotherapy as well as the ability to demonstrate spiritual maturity and inner strength. Therefore, the aim of the core courses is to convey an understanding of the theories and pragmatic skills of Buddhist counselling and to cultivate students' spiritual competencies. Students will acquire knowledge, skills, professional ethics, and experiences regarding various empirically supported traditional counselling therapies, Buddhist-derived interventions, and spiritual practices.

Each course can take the form of lectures, class discussions, role playing, and video demonstrations, and may also involve other experiential learning activities such as contemplative exercises. These courses are normally assessed by both examinations and coursework, with the examination portion accounting for no more than 20% of the course assessment. Assessments may take the form of essays (of no more than 3,000 words each), quizzes, role playing, video demonstrations, contemplative practices, assignments, projects, presentations, class participation, and examinations.

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

Elective courses will enable students to acquire a solid theoretical background in the methods and contents of Buddhist teaching-based interventions and Buddhist psychology by reviewing the traditional and contemporary histories and practical applications in today's psycho-social environment. Furthermore, students will have opportunities to study various Buddhist liturgies and rituals, to examine how Buddhism has evolved to be of service of the sick and the dying, and to understand how these religious practices in Buddhism are used in multiple circumstances to cater to the needs of different clients. The aim of these specialized courses is to facilitate student learning through disciplinary methods and cross-disciplinary dialogue, as well as to teach theoretical and practical modes of inquiry and encourage self-critical experiential reflection.

Each course can take the form of lectures, class discussions, role playing, seminars, and video demonstrations, as well as other experiential learning activities such as contemplative exercises. Assessment items and tasks may include quizzes, role plays, video demonstrations, contemplative practices, assignments, projects, presentations, class participation, and essays (of no more than 3,000 words each). Most of elective courses are assessed by 100% coursework, though examinations may comprise a range of 50% to 60% of the assessment in a small number of elective courses.

To enable interdisciplinary study, elective courses of the Master of Social Sciences (Counselling) programme will also be provided to students as options for course selection. The cross-listed elective courses from the Master of Social Sciences (Counselling) programme are worth 6 credits. They normally take the form of one 3-hour lecture or 2-hour lecture plus one 1-hour tutorial each week throughout a regular 12-week semester. Assessment is by various methods including projects, presentations, quizzes and written assignments, totally about 5,000 words. They are assessed by 100% coursework.

### 3. Capstone Experience (12 credits)

The purpose of capstone experience is to integrate knowledge and skills acquired, and which are prescribed in the MBC curriculum. 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. Each student will choose an option that best fits one's career aspirations and will be assigned a supervisor who will meet regularly to help that student complete the capstone experience. The number of hours of student learning activities (including both contact hours and all other forms of student learning activities) range from 240 to 360 hours and contact hours will be in a range of 10 to 25 hours. Students have four options.

#### Option A: *Contemplative and religious practices in Buddhism*

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. This option involves 10 to 25 contact hours, including supervision in person and by email, and personal feedback regarding draft materials as needed. Assessment is by 100% coursework.

#### 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. 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. This option involves 10 to 25 contact hours, including supervision in person and by email, and personal feedback regarding draft materials as needed. Assessment is by 100% coursework.

#### 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 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. This option involves 10 to 25 contact hours, including supervision in person and by email, and personal feedback as needed. Assessment is by 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. This option involves 10 to 25 contact hours, including supervision in person and by email, and personal feedback as needed. Assessment is by 100% coursework.

Both full-time and part-time students should submit the output of the capstone experience project by a deadline specified by the Centre in the final academic year of their studies.

Amended June 2020