

REGULATIONS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF BUDDHIST STUDIES (MBuddhStud)

(See also General Regulations)

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

MBS 1. To be eligible for admission to the courses leading to the Master of Buddhist Studies, candidates

- (a) shall comply with the General Regulations;
- (b) shall hold
 - (i) a Bachelor's degree with honours of this University; or
 - (ii) another qualification of equivalent standard from this University or from another University or comparable institution accepted for this purpose; and
- (c) shall satisfy the examiners in a qualifying examination if required.

MBS 2. Candidates who do not hold a Bachelor's degree with honours of this University or another qualification of equivalent standard may in exceptional circumstances be permitted to register if they demonstrate adequate preparation for studies at this level and satisfy the examiners in a qualifying examination.

Qualifying examination

- MBS 3. (a) A qualifying examination may be set to test a candidate's formal academic ability or the candidate's 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.
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Award of degree

- MBS 4. To be eligible for the award of the degree of Master of Buddhist Studies, candidates shall
- (a) comply with the General Regulations; and
 - (b) complete the curriculum and satisfy the examiners in accordance with the regulations as set out below.
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Length of curriculum

MBS 5. The curriculum shall extend over not less than one academic year of full-time study, or not less than two academic years of part-time study, with a minimum of 300 hours of prescribed work, and shall include an examination comprising eight written papers, or six written papers and one dissertation, to be held in the manner prescribed in the syllabuses.

Completion of curriculum

- MBS 6. To complete the curriculum, candidates
- (a) shall follow courses of instruction and complete satisfactorily all prescribed written work; and
 - (b) where so provided in the syllabuses, shall complete and present a satisfactory dissertation in lieu of two courses on a subject within their approved fields of study, and;
 - (c) shall satisfy the examiners in all prescribed courses and in any prescribed form of examination.
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Title of dissertation

MBS 7. Subject to the provisions of Regulation MBS 6(b), the title of dissertation shall be submitted for approval by not later than March 31 of the final academic year in which the teaching programme ends and the dissertation shall be presented by a date prescribed in the syllabuses; candidates shall submit a statement that the dissertation represents their own work (or in the case of joint work, a statement countersigned by their co-worker(s), which shows the degree of their work) undertaken after registration as candidates for the degree.

Examinations

- MBS 8. (a) Where so prescribed in the syllabuses, coursework or a dissertation shall constitute part or whole of the examination for one or more courses.
- (b) 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 examination of one or more courses.

MBS 9. Candidates who have failed to satisfy the examiners at their first attempt in not more than half of the number of 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; or
- (b) to repeat a year of the curriculum and present themselves for examination in the courses prescribed for the repeated year.

MBS 10. Subject to the provisions of Regulation MBS 6(b), candidates who have failed to present a satisfactory dissertation may be permitted to submit a new or revised dissertation within a specified period.

MBS 11. Candidates who are unable because of illness to be present for one or more papers in any written examination other than those held in their final academic year of study 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 two weeks of the first day of the candidates' absence from the examination.

MBS 12. Candidates who

- (a) are not permitted to present themselves for re-examination in any written paper or any course examined by means of coursework assessment in which they have failed to satisfy the examiners under the provisions of Regulation MBS 9; or
- (b) have failed to satisfy the examiners in any written paper or any course examined by means of coursework assessment at a second attempt; or

- (c) are not permitted to submit a new or revised dissertation under the provisions of Regulation MBS 10; or
- (d) have failed to submit a satisfactory new or revised dissertation under the provisions of Regulation MBS 10

may be required to discontinue their studies.

Examination results

MBS 13. At the conclusion of the examination, and after the presentation of dissertation, if applicable, a pass list shall be published. Candidates who have shown exceptional merit at the whole examination may be awarded a mark of distinction, and this mark shall be recorded in the candidates' degree diploma.

SYLLABUSES FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF BUDDHIST STUDIES

1. PURPOSE

This programme provides students with a basic and sound understanding of Buddhist teachings and their practical usage in modern societies, for example, contemporary Buddhism, Buddhism as applied to counselling, palliative care and psychotherapy, with particular reference to the present state of scholarly research. Students will also have a chance to study and critically review Buddhism in Hong Kong, Mainland China and the region.

2. PROGRAMME DURATION

The curriculum shall extend over not less than one academic year of full-time study, or not less than two academic years of part-time study, with a minimum of 300 hours of prescribed work.

3. PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

All courses are offered on a semester basis. Candidates must complete eight courses by electing the four compulsory foundation courses plus at least two core courses, and may, subject to the provisions of Regulation MBS 6(b), elect to offer a dissertation in lieu of the remaining two courses.

Foundation courses:

- BSTC6001. Theravada Buddhism
- BSTC6002. Introduction to Mahayana Buddhism
- BSTC6003. The social dimensions of Buddhism
- BSTC6004. The scientific foundation of Buddhist wisdom

Core courses:

- BSTC6005. Buddhism, science and human welfare
- BSTC6006. Counselling and pastoral practice
- BSTC6007. Introduction to Chinese Buddhism
- BSTC6008. Buddhism in contemporary China
- BSTC6009. How to teach Buddhism
- BSTC6010. Religion, rituals and myths
- BSTC6011. Buddhist mediation
- BSTC6026. Self-awareness: the Buddhist theory and practice

Elective courses:

- BSTC6012. Introduction to Japanese Buddhism
- BSTC6013. Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism
- BSTC6014. The development of Buddhist practice and Buddhist literature in the West
- BSTC6015. Impact of Buddhist cultures
- BSTC6016. Buddhist monasticism
- BSTC6017. Study of the Vinaya
- BSTC6018. Chinese textual study and translation
- BSTC6019. Social dimension of Theravada Buddhism
- BSTC6020. Basic Pali #
- BSTC6021. Basic Sanskrit
- BSTC6022. Basic Tibetan
- BSTC6023. Buddhist art and thought in Indian and Asian cultures
- BSTC6024. Special topics in Buddhist studies
- BSTC6025. Dissertation

This is a whole-year course which is equivalent to two single-semester courses.

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

4. SYLLABUSES

Foundation courses

BSTC6001. Theravada Buddhism

The Buddha's teachings recorded in the Pali literature will be the main focus on this study. Attention is drawn to the definition of Theravada Buddhism and the differences existing between Theravada Buddhism and Early Buddhism, Early Buddhism and Pali Buddhism. Candidates are expected to study the basic concepts of Theravada Buddhism in comparison with the concepts of early Indian culture. The following concepts should be studied in detail: Buddha, Bodhisatta, Arahanta, Gods, Four Noble Truths, Dependent origination, Kamma and rebirth, Five Aggregates and twelve bases, cosmology, cultivation (Bhavana) of mind and spiritual faculties.

BSTC6002. Introduction to Mahayana Buddhism

This course aims at students without previous knowledge of Mahayana Buddhism. It provides an introduction to Mahayana Buddhism in the widest sense. After a brief look at the development of Buddhism in India after the death of the Buddha, this unit concentrates on the historical, philosophical and religious origins of Mahayana Buddhism in India. These include the Bodhisattva ideal; Buddhological developments; the philosophical systematizations of the Madhymaka and Yogacara schools; the reasons for the dominant position of Mahayana Buddhism in China and an investigation on the features of the newly emerged Mahayana modernism (i.e., Japanese Buddhism).

BSTC6003. The social dimensions of Buddhism

This unit concentrates on the various aspects of Buddhist social philosophy and its historical development. It consists of various topics, such as the twofold process of society (origin and dissolution), the Buddha and society, the Buddhist stratification of society, social implication of the five precepts, Buddhist perspectives on morality, ethics and economics, Buddhism and peace, the environment, and human rights.

BSTC6004. The scientific foundation of Buddhist wisdom

This course examines how some ideas in Buddhist thoughts can be analyzed scientifically. Students will learn about how Buddhist ideas can be translated into testable research hypotheses, and how methods in the social sciences could throw new light on these ideas. Emphases will be placed on how social science research could inform (a) discussions of the phenomenal world described in Buddhist writings and (b) the application of Buddhist wisdom in daily life. Methodological themes will be illustrated with concrete social science research examples in the following areas:

Why do we suffer? The role of subjective constructions
 Development of expertise and wisdom
 Language use and cognitive representation of the reality
 Mental rigidity and creativity
 Transformational constructionism and self-regulation

The course will end by visioning how the Buddhist religious traditions may add a new dimension to the science of the human psyche.

Core courses

BSTC6005. Buddhism, science and human welfare

Over the last twenty years, a fruitful and increasingly powerful dialogue has developed between Eastern and Western psychologies. This course offers an overview of these developments; explores the extent to which Western science-based understandings of human nature can be developed to provide practical elucidation of the transformation of human experience, which Buddhism promises; and discusses the implications for the promotion of peace and harmony in the world. Topics include neuroscientific, evolutionary and ecological approaches to the human being; psychological and cognitive science approaches to the nature of mind; psychosocial approaches to the nature of self: evolution and development of the 'self system'; and scientific and psychotherapeutic approaches to 'suffering'.

BSTC6006. Counselling and pastoral practice

This course aims at providing students with basic knowledge and understanding of the application of Buddhist theory and practices to counselling and personal transformation. It covers from the Buddhist perspective the psychology of perception, emotions and thoughts; basic skills and concepts in counselling; recent development and research in psychotherapy, and insights into caring for the dying and their carers. The course comprises lectures, seminars, exercises and Buddhist practices. Students should be prepared to participate in the practices and exercises in class in order to acquire an experiential as well as intellectual understanding of the subject.

BSTC6007. Introduction to Chinese Buddhism

The course examines the introduction, development and transformation of Buddhist thought in China, with special emphasis on the basic teachings and characteristics of the major Chinese Buddhist schools. Class will be conducted in Cantonese and Chinese will be used in examination.

BSTC6008. Buddhism in contemporary China

This unit is designed to show the impact of the socio-economical and political conditions on Buddhism in China. It will focus on the rise and decline of Buddhism in modern China (18th – 20th century). This includes the revival in the 19th century, problems faced by the Buddhists since 1949, the remarkable changes in Buddhism after the Cultural Revolution, the place of Buddhism in current Chinese system, humanitarian Buddhism (Engaged Buddhism) and its social implications in present China, as well as Buddhism in 21st century.

BSTC6009. How to teach Buddhism

This course is offered in conjunction with the new syllabus for the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination of Buddhist Studies in the year 2005. Interactive teaching modes such as problem-based learning and methods of presentation of difficult Buddhist ideology will be explored. Emphasis will also be placed on exploring means to apply the teaching of Buddhism into daily life. Students will be encouraged to participate in sharing their teaching experience. Classes will be conducted in Cantonese and Chinese will be used in coursework assessment.

BSTC6010. Religion, rituals and myths

This course will consider the central role of religion in the transition from traditional to industrial society and the problematic status of religion in the modern world. It will examine the contributions of classical social theorists, Marx, Weber and Durkheim, and also the more recent work on such issues as secularization, new religious movements, and alternatives to religion. It will ask: is religion in decline in the modern world?

BSTC6011. Buddhist mediation

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 which reflects the Mahayana ideal of the practice of the Way of Bodhichitta of benefiting oneself and others in being able to resolve conflicts for oneself and for others and 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 in an integral approach and be able to apply the appropriate skills to be their own mediator and to mediate other people's dispute in their peer group or community. The model of teaching will be by lecture, demonstration by videotapes or role-plays, role-play exercises in small groups and self-reflective learning.

BSTC6026. Self-awareness: the Buddhist theory and practice

This course takes a comprehensive approach to examine the Buddhist doctrine of self-awareness as developed in various Buddhist schools including Mahasamghika, Theravada, Sarvastivada, Sautrantika, Yogacara, and Madhyamaka. Practical significance of this doctrine will also be explored in the particular cases of Zen and Dzogchen. Attention is given to the implication of this doctrine to our daily life and to the scientific study of the human mind. Readings include Chinese, Pali, Sanskrit and Tibetan texts with English translations.

Elective courses

BSTC6012. Introduction to Japanese Buddhism

Introduction of Buddhism to Japan in the sixth century. The Heian Period: Tendai School, Kukai's Shingon School, Honen and the Pure Land School. The Kamakura Period; Nichiren and his teachings; Zen Buddhism. The Ashikagara and Edo Periods. Japanese Buddhism since Meiji.

BSTC6013. Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism

This course aims at providing historical, doctrinal and sociological dimensions of Tibetan Buddhism. It mainly consists of the following topics: the historical context and events of the transmission of Buddhism to Tibet; the various Buddhist traditions of Tibet; their history, doctrinal differences and manifold socio-political spheres of influence; the history and institution of the Dalai Lamas and Panchen Lama; Tibetan sacred art and symbolism and the mysticism and religious experience.

BSTC6014. The development of Buddhist practice and Buddhist literature in the West

The introduction of Buddhism to the West; evolution of the key schools (including Tibetan, Chinese and Japanese Buddhism) along with their practices and literature in the West.

BSTC6015. Impact of Buddhist cultures

This unit attempts to discuss certain aspects of the Buddhist culture, its historical evolution, and the changes which are going on now due to the influence of other cultures. It deals, in particular, with the following topics: the main features of Mahayana Buddhism, the influence of Zen Buddhism on Japanese culture, the South Asian Buddhist culture, and Bodhisattva cult in China and the Far East. Special attention will be given to the interaction, assimilation and integration between Buddhist philosophy and the Chinese culture. This will include: the influence of Buddhist philosophy on Chinese poetry, calligraphy, painting, sculpture, architecture, gardening, fencing and dancing; the vast Chinese Buddhist literature in defence of Buddhism against Confucianism and Taoism; and study of the Chinese Buddhist apocrypha.

BSTC6016. Buddhist monasticism

This unit examines the transformation of various monastic communities in different traditions in the history of Buddhism. A very important part of this unit will be the study of the origin and development of Buddhist institutions from historical, political, economical, phenomenological, sociological and cultural perspective. This will be considered particularly in the Chinese context. Special attention will be given to the democratic features of the Sangha institution, monastic economy, monastic education, the role of the Sangha in society, as well as the relationship between the Sangha and the state.

BSTC6017. Study of the Vinaya

This unit focuses on the transformation of the Vinaya and its relation to the development of Buddhism. It deals mainly with the following topics: the transformation of the Sangha and its impact on the formation of three dimensions of the Vinaya; transformation in the spirit of the Vinaya (*sila*) to the Bodhisattva precepts, from the individual rules to the Vinaya school, and from the communal rules (*Khanddhaka*) to the Pure Regulation (百丈清規). It will also deal with the influence of the Pure Regulations on the Chan school, Taoism, the secret societies and the government administration.

BSTC6018. Chinese textual study and translation

This unit is designed to help students to read Chinese Buddhist texts in classic Chinese. It will provide guidance for students who are interested in the translating selections from Chinese Buddhist canon. Translation of texts in the Buddhist Canon requires both language skills and an expert understanding of the Buddhist Literature. Through seminars and discussion tutorials students will consider in depth a selection of Buddhist texts of their choice. It will train them in the capacity for the original research.

BSTC6019. Social dimension of Theravada Buddhism

Candidates are expected here to have a sufficient knowledge of Buddhist teachings concerning human society. The following topics should particularly be studied: origin and evolution of society, social stratification and the classification of individuals, oneness of mankind, social institutions, institution of family and its significance in the social fabric, economy and morality. Other topics include political philosophy, sangha and gana, religious institutions, crime and punishment, human relationships and value system, rights and duties, ideal society.

BSTC6020. Basic Pali

This is an introductory course meant for those who have no knowledge of the language of Pali. The purpose of this course is to make the students more and more familiar with Pali idiom. It enables them to understand the Buddhist Sutras compiled in Pali. Duration of this course is one academic year which is divided into two semesters. In the first semester, basic grammar is taught along with Pali exercises. The course contents include the following: Pali phonetics, parts of speech, different nouns and their declension, different verbs and their conjugation, participles and their function, absolutives, sandhi, syntax and classification of sentences. The second semester is mainly devoted to the understanding and translating of selected Pali Sutras and to build up sufficient vocabularies for the students.

BSTC6021. Basic Sanskrit

The unit aims at introducing students to the basics of Sanskrit grammar as a foundation for reading Sanskrit texts. It involves the completion of weekly Sanskrit/English and English/Sanskrit exercises and the preparation of short passages for reading.

BSTC6022. Basic Tibetan

The purpose of this course is to provide a working knowledge of Tibetan grammar and an ability to read the standard Tibetan texts. The major emphasis will be on the study of Buddhist texts preserved in the Tibetan Tripitaka. The course will begin with grammatical exercises and guidance for students to read simple Tibetan texts.

BSTC6023. Buddhist art and thought in Indian and Asian cultures

This unit offers an examination of the spread of Buddhist traditions through India and South East (Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and Indonesia) and Central Asia (Silk Road), concentrating on their character and historical impact on indigenous cultures and religions. Covering the length and breadth of Asia, the phenomenally diverse artistic traditions are considered both from the iconography and contextual approaches, as well as the standard stylistic and developmental approaches.

BSTC6024. Special topics in Buddhist studies

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

BSTC6025. Dissertation

The dissertation shall be a critical study within the field of Buddhist Studies and shall be 20,000-24,000 words in length. The title of dissertation shall be submitted for approval by not later than March 31 of the final academic year in which the teaching programme ends and the dissertation shall be presented by June 30 of the same year. Candidates shall submit a statement that the dissertation represents their own work (or in the case of joint work, a statement countersigned by their co-worker(s), which shows the degree of their work) undertaken after registration as candidates for the degree. The examiners may also prescribe an oral examination on the subject of the dissertation.