

KATHMANDU UNIVERSITY
CENTRE FOR BUDDHIST STUDIES
AT RANGJUNG YESHE INSTITUTE

Master of Arts (MA)
Buddhist Studies

Program Course Description

Approved 2009



Kathmandu, Nepal

About Kathmandu University

Kathmandu University was established by an Act of Parliament in November 1991. The University began functioning from December 11, 1991, and was formally inaugurated on August 2, 1995.

Kathmandu University is an autonomous, non-profit, non-governmental public institution of higher learning.

The mission of the university is to:

- ◆ Promote all-round development of students' abilities and personalities.
- ◆ Develop an awareness of the role of science and its application in understanding problems of society.
- ◆ Extend and disseminate knowledge and encourage its application.
- ◆ Develop a community of scholars, students and staff.

The University site is located at Dhulikhel, Kavre, in Kathmandu, Nepal and covers an area of 17 hectares of land. The University offers its academic and short-term programs through six schools:

- ◆ School of Management
- ◆ School of Science
- ◆ School of Engineering
- ◆ School of Arts
- ◆ School of Education
- ◆ School of Medical Sciences

MASTER OF ARTS IN BUDDHIST STUDIES

The School of Arts provides a Master of Arts in Buddhist Studies at Kathmandu University – Centre for Buddhist Studies (KU-CBS), which is located at Rangjung Yeshe Institute (RYI), Boudhanath, Kathmandu. The program has a yearly enrollment capacity of 10 students.

KATHMANDU UNIVERSITY

CENTRE FOR BUDDHIST STUDIES AT RANGJUNG YESHE INSTITUTE

Master of Arts (MA) in Buddhist Studies

INTRODUCTION

The MA program at Kathmandu University – Centre for Buddhist Studies is a 2-year (4 semester, 60 credit) program that combines graduate level seminars with extensive research in original primary source literature and languages. The aim of the program is to introduce students to the methods and skills involved in mature academic research and to develop their ability to undertake independent research projects within the field of Buddhist Studies. At the beginning of the program, each student is assigned a Thesis Supervisor who works with the student on developing the thesis proposal and the thesis itself.

APPLICATION AND ADMISSION

To be admitted to the MA Program, a student should have a Baccalaureate degree from an accredited academic institution containing:

- ◆ Four courses (12 credits) in Asian Religion or Buddhist Studies.
- ◆ Two courses (6 credits) in Classical Tibetan and/or Sanskrit.

Meeting the minimum entrance requirements does not automatically guarantee admission. All qualified applications are subject to final approval by the Graduate Committee at CBS. Applicants holding an appropriate degree without all required elements may still qualify to enter the MA program by completing preparatory course work as prescribed by the Graduate Committee at CBS.

To apply to the MA Program at Kathmandu University's Centre for Buddhist Studies (CBS) at Rangjung Yeshe Institute, one must complete the following steps:

1. Fill in the application form and statement of purpose.
2. Submit the application fee.
3. Send an official copy of your Bachelor (BA) transcript by mail.
4. Send a digital copy of your BA transcript.
5. Send a digital copy of your Higher Secondary School (High school) transcript.
6. Submit letter of reference by mail.
7. Submit proof of English language proficiency.

1. Application Form and Statement of Purpose

The application form consists of two parts: 1) The general application, and 2) the statement of purpose. For the statement of purpose, you should consider writing it separately in a word processor and pasting it into the essay portion of the application form, in case of connectivity problems. This statement (500-750 words) should describe your general background, academic interests, and reasons for applying to the MA program at CBS.

2. Application Fee

For Nepalese citizens the application fee is 500 NRP, to be paid at the CBS office. For International students the application fee is US \$50 payable online via PayPal.

3. Official Transcript of BA degree

An Official Transcript of completed courses and grades should be sent directly from the applicant's college to CBS. Applicants who are in the last year of their undergraduate studies should submit a current official transcript of grades and courses. Entry into the MA program may then be granted conditionally, upon the successful completion of the applicant's BA degree with a CGPA of at least 3.0, prior to the commencement of the MA program.

Mailing Address:

Centre for Buddhist Studies at Rangjung Yeshe Institute
P.O. Box 21277
Kathmandu, Nepal

4. Bachelor's degree (BA) Transcript

Send your Bachelor's transcript as a digital file by email to admin@cbs.edu.np.

This transcript needs to show grades. If this transcript is not in English, please also send its English translation.

5. Higher Secondary School (High school) Transcript

Send your Higher Secondary School (High school) transcript as a digital file by email to admin@cbs.edu.np. This transcript needs to show grades. If this transcript is not in English, please also send its English translation.

***Note:** An official copy of your transcripts must be submitted no later than the first day of classes.

6. Letter of Reference

Applicants should request a letter of reference indicating the applicant's suitability as a graduate student in Buddhist Studies. This letter should be requested from a college or university professor familiar with the applicant's academic qualifications. The recommending professor should submit this letter to the applicant in a signed and sealed envelope with the professor's signature across the seal.

7. Submit Proof of English Language Proficiency

All applicants whose native language is not English or who have not graduated from a college or university where English is the language of instruction are required to submit a TOEFL Test (Test of English as a Foreign Language) with scores of at least 100 on the computer-based exam (iBT) or at least 600 on the paper-based test. Applicants who have graduated from a college or university where classes are taught in English should provide documentation that English was the language of instruction. Due to the limited availability of the TOEFL testing in Nepal, Nepalese applicants may demonstrate their English proficiency by completing a test administered by the Graduate Coordinator at CBS. Such applicants should contact the office at CBS to arrange the date of testing.

Evaluation, Admission, and Notification

Once all components of the application have been completed the admissions committee will review the application.

Normally a decision on admission will be made within one month and students will be notified of the outcome via email.

Successful applicants must accept or decline the admissions offer within two weeks in an email reply and secure their places in the MA Program by submitting the full tuition payment for either one or two semesters, or a deposit of US \$500. The remainder of the tuition is due on the first day of classes.

COURSES

To complete the MA in Buddhist Studies with Himalayan Languages, 60 credits of the following course elements must be completed. (See below for Course Descriptions.)

- BSTD 501 Advanced Buddhist Readings I - Tibetan I**
- BSTD 502 Advanced Buddhist Readings III - Tibetan II**
- BSTD 503 Advanced Buddhist Readings II - Sanskrit I**
- BSTD 504 Advanced Buddhist Readings IV - Sanskrit II**
- BSTD 505 Research Seminar I (mandatory)**
- BSTD 506 Research Seminar II (mandatory)**
- BSTD 603 Research Seminar III (mandatory)**
- BSTD 507 Buddhist Philosophical Traditions I**
- BSTD 508 Buddhist Philosophical Traditions II**
- BSTD 604 Buddhist Philosophical Traditions III**
- BSTD 601 Specialized Textual and Historical Studies**
- BSTD 602 Guided Studies**

OUTLINE OF COURSES

Each semester, 15 credits from the following 21 must be taken. Please note that in some semesters, only 3 of the following 4 courses may be offered.

Semester 1	Credits
Advanced Buddhist Readings I – Tibetan I (BSTD 501)	6
Advanced Buddhist Readings II – Sanskrit I (BSTD 503)	6
Buddhist Philosophical Traditions I (BSTD 507)	6
Research Seminar I - mandatory - (BSTD 505)	3

Semester 2	Credits
Advanced Buddhist Readings III – Tibetan II (BSTD 502)	6
Advanced Buddhist Readings IV – Sanskrit II (BSTD 504)	6
Buddhist Philosophical Traditions II (BSTD 508)	6
Research Seminar II - mandatory - (BSTD 506)	3

Semester 3	Credits
Specialized Textual and Historical Studies (BSTD 601)	6
Buddhist Philosophical Traditions III (BSTD 604)	6
Guided Studies (BSTD 602)	6
Research Seminar III - mandatory - (BSTD 603)	3

Semester 4	Credits
MA Thesis (BSTD 610)	15

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

BSTD 501	Advanced Buddhist Readings I - Tibetan	6 credits
BSTD 502	Advanced Buddhist Readings III - Tibetan II	6 credits
BSTD 503	Advanced Buddhist Readings II - Sanskrit I	6 credits
BSTD 504	Advanced Buddhist Readings IV - Sanskrit II	6 credits

These courses are readings undertaken by students individually with a weekly 3-hour plenary session. The texts read in this course are normally classical Mahāyāna texts from the Sanskrit and Tibetan literary traditions but may also include other genres such as, for example, historical, political, medical and polemical literature. The purpose of the courses in Advanced Buddhist Readings is to provide students with the ability to read complex philosophical material in the primary source languages for Buddhism in the Himalayan context.

Prerequisites: For BSTD 501, BSTD 503: None.

Prerequisites: For BSTD 502, BSTD 504: Completion of BSTD 501 and BSTD 503.

BSTD 505	Research Seminar I	3 credits
BSTD 506	Research Seminar II	3 credits
BSTD 603	Research Seminar III	3 credits

The Research Seminars are courses on research method and contemporary issues in modern scholarship. Discussed in these courses are the methodological issues involved in academic research of religion in general and Buddhism in particular. The courses introduce the student to the historical development of the study of religion while making use of specific case studies to analyze scholarly methods of particular influence to the study of Buddhism. The seminars are taught in weekly 3-hour plenary sessions requiring active student participation as an important means for developing the ability of the graduate student to engage in critical scholarship and research.

Prerequisites: None.

BSTD 507	Buddhist Philosophical Traditions I	6 credits
BSTD 508	Buddhist Philosophical Traditions II	6 credits
BSTD 604	Buddhist Philosophical Traditions III	6 credits

This is a series of specialized courses in Buddhist philosophy and scriptural interpretation. The aim of this series is to deepen the knowledge of complex Buddhist philosophical topics and their relations to the broader field of Buddhist studies.

Course readings are primarily classical Indian treatises and their Indo-Tibetan commentaries in areas of classical Buddhist philosophy, such as Abhidharma, Madhyamaka, and Yogācāra thought. While studying specialized topics of Buddhist philosophy, students are encouraged to relate the material to larger perspectives within the context of contemporary philosophical issues.

Prerequisites: None

BSTD 601 Specialized Textual and Historical Studies 6 credits

This course is a study in a relevant area of the larger topical background within which the student's thesis will be located. The topic of study is chosen by the student in consultation with the Thesis Supervisor. The course is an opportunity for the student to acquire a broad knowledge of the historical, social, and religious background for the thesis topic in order to properly contextualize the narrower field within which the actual thesis research takes place. The course is taught as weekly 3-hour seminar sessions where the literature and cultural history of the thesis topic is discussed and analyzed in plenum with the Thesis Supervisor and other students.

Prerequisites: Successful completion of the first year of the MA Program (30 credits).

BSTD 602 Guided Studies 6 credits

This course is a specialized study in the topic of the thesis during which the student is familiarized with the relevant primary and secondary literature in the area of study. The student is guided in the textual study by the Thesis Supervisor and, during weekly meetings, the wide variety of methodological approaches to the field of Buddhist Studies such as philology, historiography, philosophy, textual criticism, sociology, anthropology, art history, etc. are discussed in terms of their relevance for the academic study of Buddhism in general and especially in relation to the topic chosen for the thesis.

Prerequisites: Successful completion of BSTD 502.

BSTD 610 MA Thesis 15 credits

The thesis should represent a thorough knowledge of Buddhism and demonstrate the ability to engage with primary source material for research purposes. By August 1st of the year after enrolling in the MA program (approximately 11 months after enrollment), the student must submit a Thesis Proposal (approx. 1,800 words), developed in collaboration with the Thesis Supervisor, for approval by the Graduate Committee at CBS. In order to proceed to the third semester of study it is a requirement that this committee approves the thesis proposal. The length of

the thesis is restricted to a maximum of 25,000 words. The defense of the thesis is carried out in examination by the Thesis Supervisor, and an External Examiner appointed by the Graduate Committee at CBS as per KU policy.

MA THESIS GUIDELINES

PROPOSAL

To advance to the third semester of the MA program, a thesis proposal must be submitted to and approved by the Graduate Committee at CBS. The proposal should be approximately 1800 words in length (excluding bibliography). Pages should be double-spaced (approx. 250 words per page) and contain the following elements:

1. Personal Details and Thesis Title.

On the first page of the proposal, the name and year of enrollment into the MA program should be listed together with a tentative descriptive title for the thesis. The title may be changed but if the topic is changed considerably, a revised thesis proposal may be necessary.

2. Abstract.

A summary of the thesis topic, the approach taken and the expected result in a clear and concise manner (maximum 150 words).

3. Outline.

A tentative outline of the individual sections in the thesis.

4. Overview of Existing Research.

A brief overview of previous research within the area of the thesis topic, mentioning how the thesis is positioned in relation to the existing research.

5. Methodological Approach.

A methodological discussion of the thesis explaining the planned approach to the research.

8. Bibliography.

A preliminary bibliography of relevant primary and secondary literature.

GRADUATE COMMITTEE

The Graduate Committee is the central body responsible for the implementation of all graduate study programs at CBS. The committee consists of five members. Three of these members are appointed yearly by the Director of Studies at CBS. All members of the committee hold degrees appropriate for supervision and implementation of both Master of Arts and Doctoral studies.

The committee consists of the following posts:

1. Graduate Committee Head

This post is filled by the Dean of Arts, Kathmandu University.

2. Secretary

This post is filled by the Director of Studies, CBS.

3. Members

This consists of three members elected yearly by the management committee at CBS.

The Graduate Committee convenes as necessary to review applications and to implement the graduate program.

SUPERVISION

At the beginning of the program, each student is assigned a Thesis Supervisor (TS) who works with the student on developing the thesis proposal and the thesis itself. Once the thesis proposal has been approved by the Graduate Committee, the student and the TS work together during the final year of the program to develop a bibliography, discuss issues of method and style, and analyze the historical, literary, and philosophical setting for the thesis topic. Student and supervisor should stay in regular contact during the final year; in particular, during the fourth semester. During the fourth semester, the student is entitled to six 1-hour meetings with the TS to cover the following:

- ◆ An introductory meeting to discuss the topic, literature, and thesis outline.
- ◆ A follow-up meeting to finalize and elaborate on the working method.
- ◆ Additional meetings to discuss the individual chapters of the thesis.
- ◆ A final meeting in which the supervisor approves submission of the thesis.

STRUCTURE AND STYLE

The thesis should contain the following elements:

- ◆ Title page listing the title, name of student, date and supervisor's name.
- ◆ Table of contents.
- ◆ Abstract (1 page).
- ◆ The thesis itself.
- ◆ Bibliography.
- ◆ Appendices (if relevant).

The thesis should be written in Times Extended Roman - 12 point font with double spacing between lines. All notes should be in footnotes rather than endnotes, and be written in Times Extended Roman - 10 point font. The style in the thesis should follow the general outlines given in the *Chicago Manual of Style* (available in the MA Program library).

LENGTH OF THE THESIS

The length of the thesis is restricted to a maximum of 25,000 words, including title page, table of contents, but excluding bibliography.

SUBMISSION

When submitting the thesis, it should be ring or spiral-bound and submitted to the CBS office as three hard copies, and one text or .PDF file saved onto a CD.

SUBMISSION DEADLINES

The final thesis should be submitted by April 30th of the second year of the student's enrollment in the program. If a student is unable to submit the thesis by this deadline, he or she may send a written appeal to the Graduate Committee before the expiry of the deadline to apply for an extension. If the Graduate Committee grants this extension, the deadline can be extended up to a maximum of 12 months. For extensions of deadlines, the student must continue registration in the MA program as a thesis-based student.

ASSESSMENT AND DEFENSE

The thesis should demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the Buddhist tradition as it relates to the chosen thesis topic, and the ability to engage with primary source material for research purposes. To this effect, the thesis will be assessed and graded by the TS and an External Examiner appointed by the Graduate Committee at CBS as per KU policy. The assessment must be completed within one month following the submission of the thesis at the CBS office.

An oral defense of the thesis will be arranged within six weeks of the thesis submission date. Exception to this rule occurs when a thesis is submitted between April 30th and July 15th. In such cases, the oral defense will be scheduled for the beginning of the Fall Semester.

At the end of the thesis defense, the student will receive a pass/fail grade for the thesis.

The oral defense is not open to the public unless the student gives written approval to open the defense to the public.

APPEALS

If the student wishes to appeal the assessment of the thesis, he or she may do so by following the regular appeals policy at CBS.

EVALUATION SCHEME

The academic performance of the students is judged through:

- ◆ Continuous in-semester assessment
- ◆ End-semester examination

The continuous in-semester assessment of the student is made by the concerned faculty member using any or a combination of the following:

- ◆ Written tests.
- ◆ Oral tests.
- ◆ Assignments.
- ◆ Seminars.
- ◆ Term papers.

The end-semester examination will normally be conducted according to the examination schedule notified by the concerned office.

The mode of evaluation in a given course is decided by the concerned faculty member who may assign varying weights to one or more of the evaluation modes. The faculty member will announce such weights at the beginning of the course.

GRADING MODE:

In each course, the student will be evaluated on a 4-point scale as follows:

LETTER GRADE									
A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D	F
4.00	3.67	3.33	3.00	2.67	2.33	2.00	1.67	1.00	Fail
GRADE VALUE									

The grades used to indicate the quality of a student's performance are as follows:

- A = Excellent
- B = Very good
- C = Good
- D = Fair
- F = Failure

Apart from the letter grades mentioned above, the following letter grade may also be awarded:

- W = Withdrawn
- INC = Incomplete
- NC = Non-credit course
- 'S' = Satisfactory
- U = Unsatisfactory
- AU = Audit

GRADUATION

To graduate, students must complete the minimum number of required course credits with not less than a C-grade in each course.

Additionally, a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 2 in every semester and a cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of at least 2.0 is required.

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