

KATHMANDU UNIVERSITY
CENTRE FOR BUDDHIST STUDIES
AT RANGJUNG YESHE INSTITUTE

Master of Arts (MA)
Buddhist Studies

Program Course Description
Pending Approval by Kathmandu University



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 and traditional textual studies with modern academic research. 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. Special attention is given to developing students' ability to conduct research in the primary languages (Tibetan and Sanskrit). The program culminates with the completion and submission of a Master's thesis.

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.

For information regarding the application process as well as for applying to the program, please visit our website at www.ryi.org/admissions.

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 by means of 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, 60 credits of the following course elements must be completed. (See below for Course Descriptions.)

- ATSP 501 Advanced Textual Study – Primary I**
- ATSP 502 Advanced Textual Study – Primary II**
- ATSP 503 Advanced Textual Study – Primary III**
- ATSP 504 Advanced Textual Study – Primary IV**
- ATSP 601 Advanced Textual Study – Primary V**

- ATSE 501 Advanced Textual Study – English I**
- ATSE 502 Advanced Textual Study – English II**
- ATSE 601 Advanced Textual Study – English III**

- RTIB 501 Advanced Readings I - Tibetan**
- RTIB 502 Advanced Readings II - Tibetan**
- RSKT 501 Advanced Readings I – Sanskrit**
- RSKT 502 Advanced Readings II – Sanskrit**

- TLAN 501 Tibetan Language Study I**
- TLAN 502 Tibetan Language Study II**
- SLAN 501 Sanskrit Language Study I**
- SLAN 502 Sanskrit Language Study II**

- BSTD 505 Research Seminar I (mandatory)**
- BSTD 506 Research Seminar II (mandatory)**
- BSTD 601 MA Thesis Workshop (mandatory)**
- BSTD 603 Research Seminar III (mandatory)**
- BSTD 610 MA Thesis (mandatory)**

OUTLINE OF COURSES

Courses in the MA include advanced textual study of Indian and Tibetan Buddhist works with the aid of Tibetan commentary (oral and written) under the guidance of our monastic faculty (khenpos and lopons), as well as seminars and guided independent study focused on developing skills in modern research methods and knowledge of specialized topics in Buddhist Studies to help prepare students for writing the MA thesis.

Please note that lectures and written exams in Advanced Textual Study-Primary courses (ATSP) are conducted in Tibetan. For students who cannot follow lectures in Tibetan, there are options to take a translated textual studies course (ATSE) or a course in classical Tibetan or Sanskrit, with additional research assignments, instead (see details below).

Full-time MA students must take 15 credit hours per semester. Part-time study is possible with the approval of the MA Program Director and Director of Programs.

STANDARD COURSE OF STUDY

Semester 1	Credits
Research Seminar I – mandatory - (BSTD 505)	3
Advanced Textual Study - Primary I (ATSP 501) OR Advanced Textual Study– English I (ATSE 501)	6
Advanced Textual Study – Primary II (ATSP 502) OR Advanced Readings I – (RTIB 501 or RSKT 501) OR Language Study I – (TLAN 501 or SLAN 501)	6

Semester 2	Credits
Research Seminar II – mandatory - (BSTD 506)	3
Advanced Textual Study – Primary III (ATSP 503) OR Advanced Textual Study – English II (ATSE 502)	6

Advanced Textual Study – Primary IV (ATSP 504) OR Advanced Readings II – (RTIB 502 or RSKT 502) OR Language Study II – (TLAN 502 or SLAN 502)	6
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Semester 3	Credits
Research Seminar III – mandatory (BSTD 603)	3
Advanced Textual Study – Primary V (ATSP 601) OR Advanced Textual Study – English III (ATSE 601)	6
MA Thesis Workshop – mandatory – (BSTD 601)	6

Semester 4	Credits
MA Thesis – mandatory - (BSTD 610)	15

EXPLANATION OF COURSE OPTIONS

As noted in the table above, students with advanced language skills may replace a standard ATSP course with an Advanced Readings Course in classical Tibetan (RTIB 501 or 502) or Sanskrit (RSKT 501 or 502) during their first two semesters of study, provided this substitution is approved by the MA Program Director and Director of Programs.

During their first two semesters, students who cannot follow lectures or take written exams in Tibetan may substitute the two courses below for the two standard Advanced Textual Study (ATSP) courses:

1. One translated Specialized Textual Studies course (taught in our BA program) (ATSE 501 and 502), with additional MA-level assessments and
2. One course in classical Tibetan or Sanskrit (TLAN 501 and 502, or SLAN 501 and 502), with additional MA-level assessments.

As noted above, MA students registered for ATSE and TLAN or SLAN classes complete graduate-level assignments and assessments related to course content. If students are able to take courses in Tibetan but find it too difficult to follow two courses in Tibetan during a single semester,

they may take one standard ATSP course and either one ATSE course or one TLAN or SLAN course. Students may not take TLAN and SLAN courses in the same semester: they must choose which language they wish to study for credit. Language courses may only be taken for credit in the first year of the program, but additional language courses may be audited at any time during the program.

In the third semester of the program, students have two mandatory classes (BSTD 601 and BSTD 603) and may choose between ATSP 601 and ATSE 601 as their third class.

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Research Seminar I/II/III (BSTD 505, 506, 603) - 3 credits

These seminars focus on research methods and critical issues in current academic scholarship in the field of Buddhist Studies and related areas such as philosophy, religion, anthropology, and history. The aim of the course is to help students develop the critical skills, perspectives, knowledge base and research methods required for graduate level work in Buddhist Studies, and for writing the MA thesis in particular. Topics vary by semester. Past topics have included such courses as: Mindfulness and Buddhist Epistemology, Methodological Perspectives on Madhyamaka, Ritual Theory and Religious Experience, Tibetan Cultural History and Historiography, The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Buddhism, and Yogācāra in Tibet.

Prerequisites: For BSTD 505, None. For BSTD 506 and 603, the previous course(s) in the sequence.

Advanced Textual Study- Primary (ATSP 501, 502, 503, 504, 601) - 6 credits

These courses involve in-depth study of an Indian or Tibetan Buddhist text supported by Indian and Tibetan commentaries as well as oral explanation by a member of CBS's monastic faculty (a khenpo or lupon). Lectures, homework, and exams are given in Tibetan. This provides a context-rich environment for understanding both the literary and vernacular Tibetan speech patterns common to Tibetan Buddhist religious discourses. The Tibetan portion of the course is complemented by guided independent study on recent academic scholarship on the text and related topics, which serves as the basis for additional assessment by a supervising professor.

Prerequisites: These courses represent the study of separate primary source texts of the tradition, and as such may, at times, be studied non-consecutively.

Advanced Textual Study- English (ATSE 501, 502, 601) - 6 credits

These courses involve in-depth study of an Indian Buddhist text supported by Indian and Tibetan commentaries as well as oral explanation by a member of CBS's monastic faculty (a khenpo or lupon) translated into English. Students take quizzes and exams on course content in English. This

is complemented by guided independent study on recent academic scholarship on the text and related topics, which serves as the basis for additional assessment by a supervising professor. To make the rigor of the course equivalent to the primary language course, there is an additional writing assignment.

Prerequisites: For ATSE 501, None. For ATSE 502 and 601, the previous course(s) in the sequence.

Advanced Readings (RTIB 501, 502 or RSKT 501, 502) - 6 credits

This is a course of study proposed by a student able to work independently on a Tibetan or Sanskrit text or genre. Students wishing to register for an advanced readings course must submit a course proposal to the MA Program Director and Director of Programs at least two weeks prior to the start of the semester. If the course is approved, the student will meet regularly with a course supervisor who will guide and evaluate the student's work throughout the semester.

Prerequisites: For RTIB and RSKT 501, None. For RTIB and RSKT 502, the previous course in the sequence.

Language Study (TLAN 501, 502 or SLAN 501, 502) - 6 credits

For this course, the student enrolls in a classical Tibetan or Sanskrit language course appropriate to the student's current skill level, and engages in graduate-level research on the text(s) studied during the course or a related topic. The student will be assigned a course supervisor to guide and evaluate this research and resulting term paper.

Prerequisites: For TLAN and SLAN 501, None. For TLAN and SLAN 502, the previous course in the sequence.

MA Thesis Workshop (BSTD 601) - 6 credits

This course involves specialized study of the thesis topic, during which students deepen their familiarity with relevant primary and secondary literature and begin drafting parts of the thesis through a series of thesis-related writing assignments. Bi-weekly seminars involve presentations and discussion of research progress, with special emphasis on research methods. Students meet with their thesis supervisors as needed on alternate weeks of the course. (See details regarding the thesis proposal, the thesis, and the submission process below.)

Prerequisites: Successful completion of the first year of the MA.

MA Thesis (BSTD 610) -15 credits

During the final semester of the program, students work primarily on completing their thesis research and writing with the support of regular meetings with their thesis supervisors. When the supervisor deems the thesis is complete and of satisfactory quality, he or she will make arrangements for a defense

with an outside reader.

The thesis should be a well-informed original contribution to the field of Buddhist Studies and demonstrate the student's facility with relevant academic research methods. This contribution may be in the form of an original study of primary literature, original syntheses or analyses of existing research, or other forms of original research.

Prerequisites: Successful completion of all MA coursework.

MA THESIS PROPOSAL

To advance to the third semester of the MA program, the student must submit a thesis proposal, developed in consultation with the thesis supervisor, to the CBS Graduate Committee by **July 31st** (approximately **11** months after matriculation).

(Part-time students should speak to their supervisors to determine the deadline for their proposals.)

The proposal should be approximately 1500 -1800 words in length (excluding the bibliography). It should be double-spaced (approximately 250 words per page) and follow the conventions outlined in the current version of the "RYI Style Guide." Proposals that do not follow these conventions will not be accepted.

The proposal must contain the following elements (which should be labeled as such, excluding the title page):

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 after the proposal is approved, 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 written in a clear and concise manner (maximum 200 words). This should be the only item on the page following the title page.
3. **Overview of Existing Research.** A brief overview of previous research relevant to the thesis topic, clarifying how the thesis is positioned in relation to this research.
4. **Methodological Approach.** A methodological discussion of the thesis explaining the planned approach to the research.
5. **Outline.** A tentative outline naming the individual sections in the thesis. This should be separate from the narrative outline.
6. **Narrative Outline.** A repetition of the outline with a narrative explanation of each section of the thesis. It should be clear how the sections relate to each

other, the topic, and the expected research results.

7. **Bibliography.** A preliminary bibliography of relevant primary and secondary literature. This should be *at least* two pages in length.

CBS GRADUATE COMMITTEE

The CBS 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 Head of Academic Programs at CBS.

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 Head of Academic Programs, CBS.
3. Members. This consists of three members elected yearly by the Head of Academic Programs.

The CBS Graduate Committee convenes as necessary to review applications and to oversee the graduate programs at CBS.

SUPERVISION

After the second semester of the program, each student is assigned a thesis supervisor who works with the student to develop the thesis proposal and the thesis itself. Once the thesis proposal has been approved by the CBS Graduate Committee, the student and the thesis supervisor work together during the final year of the program to further develop the bibliography, discuss issues of method and style, and review the content of the thesis. The student and supervisor will stay in regular contact during the final year; in particular, during the fourth semester. During the fourth semester, the student is entitled to six one-hour meetings with the thesis supervisor to cover the following:

- ◆ An introductory meeting to discuss the topic, literature, and thesis outline.
- ◆ Follow-up meetings as needed to discuss methodological approach, a schedule for research and writing, chapter drafts, and the completed thesis.
- ◆ A final meeting in which the supervisor approves submission of the thesis to the external examiner.

GUIDELINES FOR THE FINAL THESIS

Content: The thesis should represent a well-informed original contribution to the field of Buddhist Studies and demonstrate a facility with relevant academic research methods. This contribution may be in the form of an original study of primary literature, original syntheses or analyses of existing research, or other forms of original research. No more than 40% of the main body of the thesis (which should be between 17,500 and 25,000 words) may be in the form of a translation of a Buddhist text.

GENERAL STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS:

- ◆ Title page listing the title of the thesis, name of the student, institution and date
- ◆ Table of contents
- ◆ Abstract (200 words)
- ◆ The body of the thesis
- ◆ Appendices (if relevant)
- ◆ Bibliography

In order to introduce the thesis topic to a scholarly audience, the introduction must include the following elements (not necessarily in this order):

- ◆ A clear statement of the contribution of the thesis to the field
- ◆ A clear statement of the research results
- ◆ A review of the relevant secondary literature
- ◆ A statement of the methodology applied in the thesis
- ◆ A narrative outline of the chapters

Format and Style: The thesis should follow the conventions outlined in the “RYI Style Guide,” which follows the Chicago Manual of Style with a few additions and exceptions specific to field of Buddhist Studies. Theses that do not follow these guidelines will not be accepted.

Length of the Thesis: The length of the thesis is restricted to a minimum length of 17,500 words (approximately 70 pages) and a maximum of 25,000 words (approximately 100 pages). This includes the title page and table of contents, but excludes the bibliography and any appendices.

SUBMISSION DEADLINES

Submission to supervisor and external examiner:

A student who wishes to defend his or her thesis before the end of the spring semester of the second year must submit the penultimate draft of the thesis to the supervisor by **March 15th**. Otherwise, students may submit the final thesis any time up to **September 15th** without penalty. After that date students must pay one third of fall tuition in order to remain enrolled in the program.

(Part-time students should discuss the deadlines for the submission of their theses with their supervisors.)

ASSESSMENT AND DEFENSE

The thesis should demonstrate a thorough knowledge of existing research relating to the thesis topic, the ability to apply advanced research methods appropriate to the topic and research

questions proposed in the thesis, and research results that make an original contribution to the field of Buddhist Studies.

To this effect, the thesis will be assessed by the thesis supervisor and an external examiner appointed by the CBS Graduate Committee as per KU policy. The external examiner is a PhD of some standing and expertise in an area related to the thesis topic.

An oral defense will typically be arranged within six weeks of the submission of the thesis to the external examiner. Exceptions to this rule may occur when a thesis is submitted between March 16th and August 31st. In such cases, the oral defense may be scheduled during 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.

FINAL SUBMISSION—After successful defense of the thesis and making any required changes, students should submit the final thesis as a PDF file to the Director of Programs and the Director of Administration by email.

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
- ◆ Term papers

The end-of-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
4.0	3.7	3.3	3.0	2.7	2.3	2.0	1.7	1.0	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 at least 2 in every semester and a cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of at least 3.0 is required for graduation.

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