



Introduction

Mindfulness is as much *caught* as it is taught. - Gary Hennessey

Good mindfulness teaching is something that is ultimately beyond description. The following, therefore, is an inevitably imperfect attempt to identify and name the specific areas of competence that Breathworks mindfulness teachers can work towards embodying. This has been developed in the interest of supporting students in the training programme and accredited teachers in their learning process. But it is really only a finger pointing at the moon.

Our hope in sharing this tool is to help students in the Breathworks training programme understand what it is they are training to become and on what basis they will be assessed as they progress through their training and accreditation process. We also hope accredited Breathworks Teachers will find this tool helpful as they deepen their knowledge and understanding of mindfulness and how to effectively teach it to others; a lifelong journey.

This document has been modified from the Mindfulness-based Interventions Teaching Assessment Criteria developed by Rebecca S. Crane, Judith G. Soulsby, Willem Kuyken, J.Mark G.Williams, and Catrin Eames. We offer our heartfelt thanks to them for pioneering this important work.

Domain 1: coverage, pacing, and organisation of class

Overview: Breathworks mindfulness teachers should be able to address and cover the content of each class, while at the same time being sensitive to the needs of the class. In order to ensure this, the teacher should have organized their course material ahead of time, and have it available to refer to, if needed. The room should be prepared in a manner that communicates care and concern for the atmosphere students are entering. Additionally, time-management is a key skill towards covering all aspects of the curriculum of each class, while at the same time conveying a sense of spaciousness, steadiness, and lack of time pressure. The ability to steer digressions back to the curriculum, but with tact and ease is also desirable.

Five key features of this domain:

1. Sufficient coverage of the key concepts and practices
2. Flexibility, being responsive to the needs of the course participants
3. Appropriateness of the themes and content (to the stage of the course and the individuals on the course)
4. Organisation of teacher, materials, and room
5. Pacing and flow of the class

Key Feature 1. Sufficient coverage of the key concepts and practices

The Teachers Notes (of the Mindfulness for Health and the Mindfulness for Stress courses) make clear what should be covered in each class. The teacher should do their best to follow the notes for each class.

Key Feature 2. Flexibility, being responsive to the needs of the course participants

The teacher also needs to be responsive to how the concepts and practices introduced in each class are received by the course participants. One of the key skills of a mindfulness teacher is to hold their class plan flexibly and lightly, being responsive to everyone in the class, and being willing to change their plan accordingly if and when necessary. For instance, the introduction of a key concept may generate strong reactions from students, which it may be necessary to honour and stay with for longer than the time provided in the Teachers Notes. Or during the enquiry after a meditation practice, it may seem worthwhile to stay with a particular enquiry for longer than is given in the Teachers Notes.

Therefore the teacher has to try to maintain a dynamic balance between moving through the content of each class, and responding to the spontaneity of the moment.

Key Feature 3. Appropriateness of the themes and content (to the stage of the course and the individuals on the course)

The courses have been designed to allow participants to move through a sequence of practice and experience, and the teacher should be aware of and sensitive to this, not introducing concepts or practices prematurely. This includes an understanding of the Breathworks six stage process. (see page 9)

Key Feature 4. Organisation of teacher, materials, and room

The teacher should ensure that all the materials for each class are available: the handbooks and recordings of meditations for course participants to take home with them; teaching aids, such as flip-chart, pens and paper, etc. Any enactments that require a supporter to engage in should be explained and rehearsed beforehand; and the room made ready, with the chairs and /or mats and cushions, etc. laid out, the heating on if necessary, refreshments for the tea break bought in, etc. Special attention should also be paid to any specific considerations for people with chronic health conditions.

Key Feature 5. Pacing and flow of the class

A well-paced class addresses the intentions of the session without exceeding the time allocated. Again, a balance is to be struck between going too fast and too slow. Sufficient time should be given to each element of the class, without a feeling of rush, but also without lingering on a point unnecessarily. The teacher should give their participants time to sense, feel, and think, but be careful of belabouring a point when they have already grasped the message.

This feature also includes working skillfully with course participants' digressions, politely interrupting peripheral discussion and bringing people back to the agenda of the class. Phrases such as the following are useful:

We may have strayed off course, shall we get back and focus on the key exploration for this session?

Let's pause there ... the point you've just raised is important, but we're going to cover it later in the course. Shall we leave it until we get there?

Do you mind stopping a moment? You've given me lots of information already. Just to make sure I've understood you correctly, let's look together at what you are describing here ...

Could you summarise your experience in a few words or short sentence?

Domain 2. Relational Skills

Overview: Teaching mindfulness is not just a matter of giving information and guidance. Mindfulness teachers communicate not only through their teaching but also, and perhaps more, by the way they are being in their classes, the way they relate to their course participants.

Five key features of this domain:

1. Relating to course participants **openly, honestly, and confidently**
2. **Connection and acceptance** - actively engaging with participants and their present moment experience, with compassion, acceptance and understanding
3. **Kindness and compassion** - showing a warm and friendly interest in each course participant
4. **Curiosity and respect** - being interested in course participants and their experience, while at the same time respecting their boundaries and need for privacy.
5. **Common Humanity** - engaging with the participants in a collaborative working relationship.

(The relational aspect to mindfulness teaching is particularly related to Domain 3: Embodiment of Mindfulness. The intention in Domain 2 is to focus on the interpersonal connection between participant and teacher.)

Key Feature 1. Relating to course participants openly, honestly, and confidently

Mindfulness teachers are honest and open in their relationships with participants. There is a sense of ease, naturalness and presence – how the teacher presents within the teaching feels like the person they are. The teacher is thoroughly at home within the teaching – it is clear that the teacher ‘knows’ what s/he is teaching from deep personal experience. This leads to confidence in responding to the process and to participants. This confidence is different from knowing the answers to things – but is a confidence in the process of the teaching – a sense of being comfortable with not knowing what will happen next, but bringing to it an open, curious attitude of ‘lets explore this together and see where it takes us’.

Key feature 2. Connection and acceptance - actively engaging with participants and their present moment experience, with kindness, acceptance, and understanding

This skill relates to the teacher’s ability to stay open to and curious about the experience of a participant, reflect back what they’ve heard and understood about what a participant shares, and ask questions that help participants connect with their present experience. Active listening skills are essential to empathic listening and responding. The teacher reflects back both the content of what participants express and its emotional tone. The teacher demonstrates genuine interest in the participant’s ‘internal reality’ and communicates in a way that helps the participant feel understood. The teacher is completely willing to ‘meet’ each individual where they are in the moment, to respond in an attuned way and to explore and honour their experience just as it is. The respect inherent within this feature includes working sensitively with cultural diversity and respecting difference.

Key feature 3. Kindness and compassion - showing a warm and friendly interest in each course participant

One of the most important ways in which course participants learn from a mindfulness teacher is through their kindness and compassion. Simply being kind, sensitive, warm, friendly, and concerned with course participants’ suffering, ‘models’ how they might learn to be kind and compassionate towards firstly themselves, and then towards others. When teaching, a mindfulness teacher should feel that their course participants are the most important people in the world at that moment, and will communicate that to them through eye contact, body language, active listening, etc. The mindfulness teacher is not an ‘expert’ telling participants what to do, but is a human being, susceptible to all the suffering of the human condition, and relates to the course participants as such. This involves more than merely being friendly and warm, it means being willing and able to be fully present to participants’ suffering with sensitivity and warmth. Sometimes, as mindfulness teachers, we may find it difficult to be present to the

suffering of a course participant. This key skill would allow a curious, patient, empathetic response, even when finding it difficult.

Key feature 4. Curiosity and respect - being interested in course participants and their experience, while at the same time respecting their boundaries and need for privacy.

The mindfulness teacher engages the participant in an active exploration of their own experience rather than relying on their ‘expertise’. They bring a gentle but alive curiosity to the explorations that unfold in each class. The teacher is responsible for creating the conditions in which learning can take place, but encourages participants to take responsibility for their own learning process. They have a strong sense of trust in participants’ ability to tap into their own inner resources - their own wisdom - rather than relying on the supposed ‘expertise’ of the teacher. The teacher is also aware that everyone will be at a different stage in their journey, will learn in their own ways, in their own time, so does not have any particular expectations.

The teacher is not trying to force change – but is rather offering a space within which the participant can engage in exploration in this moment. The teacher invites participants to explore their experience, to move towards painful experience, and to bring kindness and compassion to all this. The teacher also invites participants’ to appreciate pleasant experiences in the relevant parts of the course and to cultivate positivity and joy. The teacher demonstrates awareness of and respect for participants’ individual vulnerabilities and need for privacy, and also the particular boundaries and requirements of the participant population being taught. The teacher is sensitive and appropriate to the particular client group with which they are sharing the course material.

Key feature 5. Mutuality - engaging with the participants in a collaborative working relationship.

To ‘teach’ mindfulness is to guide a shared exploration of experience. The teacher is aware that in a sense everyone is ‘in the same boat’ - that of the human condition. Of course the teacher may ‘know’ more than their participants, and have more experience of working with their own suffering with mindfulness, but they are still working with it, exploring it, even as they ‘teach’ a class. They don’t see themselves as the ‘expert’ who tells their participants what to do. This makes each class an adventure for everyone, a collaborative venture. In this way, mindfulness teachers may share from their own experience in a timely and appropriate manner.

Domain 3: Embodiment of Mindfulness

Overview: The mindfulness teacher embodies what they teach; modelling the qualities the participants are learning. Thus mindfulness is ‘caught’ at least as much as it’s taught. As well as present-moment awareness, the teacher embodies the seven ‘attitudinal foundations’ of non-judging, patience, beginner’s mind, trust, non-striving, acceptance, and letting go (Full Catastrophe Living, Jon Kabat-Zinn, chapter 2), as well as kindness and compassion.

Five key features of this domain:

1. Present-moment awareness - embodied through behaviour and how the teacher communicates through speech and body language
2. Present moment responsiveness - to one's own experience while teaching
3. Balance between relaxed and alert - simultaneously conveying steadiness, ease, non-reactivity, *and* alertness
4. Attitudinal foundations - the teacher's way of being embodies mindfulness and kindness
5. Embodiment or Exemplification – the learning is communicated through the teacher's way of being

Key feature 1. Present-moment awareness - embodied through behaviour and how the teacher communicates through speech and body language

Present-moment awareness can be particularly sensed through the teacher's body – i.e. their posture, physical groundedness and steadiness, physical sense of ease, calm and alertness, steadiness, rhythm and pitch of voice tone, etc.

Key feature 2: Present moment responsiveness to one's own experience while teaching.

Mindfulness teachers are able to bring a present moment awareness of all of themselves (thoughts, emotions, sensations and actions) to their experience of teaching. In particular teachers pay close attention to their feelings and use this to inform their responses to participants. The teacher's present moment awareness is grounded through their direct experience. Their responses to individuals, to the group and to the teaching process are informed and supported by this direct experience – allowing the teacher to respond from a place of truth and receptivity.

The teacher's sensitivity to their direct experience influences their choices within the group – e.g. through connecting with an individual during group discussions; through the use of breathing spaces to open participants to difficulty arising within the group; through appropriate sharing of 'in the moment' direct experience. The teacher embodies a sense of 'surrender' to the moment and to what is needed now.

Through this the teacher operates predominantly in 'being' rather than 'doing' mode. Additionally, at times the teacher will guide the focus very clearly to one particular aspect of experience, and at others broaden it, to encourage participants' minds to open to new learning and possibilities.

Key feature 3:Balance between being relaxed and alert - simultaneously communicating steadiness, ease, non-reactivity, *and* alertness

Mindfulness training helps us develop a steady mind, which is both relaxed and alert. This helps teachers to be aware of thoughts and feelings as they are arising in the teaching process, so they can respond rather than react to them in the moment.

Key feature 4: Attitudinal foundations: the teacher's way of being embodies mindfulness and kindness.

The attitudinal foundations of mindfulness practice are:

- **non-judging:** the teacher supports participants to be with their experience just as it is, without adding interpretation or judgement – but in a way which enables them to see judgemental and reactive thoughts and feelings as they arise. S/he brings an intention not to judge his or her own personal or the participant's expressed experience, but instead to cultivate an attitude of curiosity.
- **patience:** the teaching process simply works with experience as it is right now and allows an understanding that things can only emerge in their own time.
- **beginner's mind:** the teacher communicates a willingness to 'suspend' judgement and approaches experience with a fresh interest and curiosity. S/he supports participants to develop a new perspective on their experience based on what arises when they bring awareness to it.
- **trust:** the teacher trusts in the process of bringing mindful attention to experience. S/he communicates a faith in what's arising in thoughts, emotions, sensations and the perceptions/intuitions connected with these. The teacher trusts participants' expertise in relation to their own experience.
- **non-striving:** the teacher allows the present to be the way it is and each participant to be the way they are. S/he is not trying to fix problems or attain any goal. This is expressed through his/her capacity to honour and inhabit the process of unfolding within the class without moving towards premature explanation or synthesis; or moving into a mode of problem solving or conceptualising.
- **acceptance:** the teacher embodies a willingness to see things as they actually are in the present moment, and offers a way of opening to and being with the reality of things without struggling to change them. S/he models accepting self, others and experience with an attitude of friendliness.
- **letting go:** the enquiry process nurtures the development of an ability to stay present and acknowledge the arising and passing of experience such as thoughts and emotions without becoming entangled in the content of it. The mindfulness-based teaching process puts a particular emphasis on coming to know our conditioned tendency to hold onto the pleasant, ignore the neutral, and reject the unpleasant, and to see the ways in

which this perpetuates our difficulties. The teacher works with letting go of expectations and of needing to guide the process towards a particular outcome, having no agenda other than exploring and understanding the actuality of participants' experience in each moment.

In addition to these seven attitudinal foundations, Breathworks includes:

- **kindness:** the teacher brings a warm and friendly interest to each participant's experience, inviting him or her to also bring kindness to their experience.
- **compassion:** the teacher is able to be with course participants at times when they are suffering, bringing not only a warm and friendly interest but also an intention to help them to ease their suffering. They will also offer ways in which the course participant might not only be with their suffering mindfully, but also bring self-compassion to it.
- **opening to a wider appreciation of what's occurring in the present moment:** the teacher not only supports participants to be with their experience just as it is, but also, when the experience is one of suffering, helps and encourages them to notice that there is more in their experience than the suffering, which enables them to experience their suffering within a sense of wholeness.

Key feature 5: Embodiment or Exemplification – the learning is communicated through the way of being of the teacher

Through their way of being, the teacher communicates the heart of the Breathworks approach. How this happens is as individual as the person himself or herself. It includes a capacity to respond intuitively to the moment, to be with difficulty and to appropriately bring personal experience to the meeting with participants.

Domain 4: Guiding mindfulness practices

Overview: The teacher offers useful practice guidance and includes all the elements required in that practice. The guidance enables participants to relate skilfully to their present moment experience and creatively work with their minds. The guidance suggests the attitudes to bring to self and experience throughout the practice. The practice balances spaciousness with precision. Skilful use of language is key to conveying all this.

The teacher should demonstrate familiarity with the key intentions of mindfulness practice generally and also the specific intentions of each practice (see below for summary of these). The teacher should also understand how the practices build upon each other and are based on the Breathworks Six Stage Process:

1. Establishing basic awareness: body scan and breathing anchor

2. Turning towards the unpleasant: compassionate acceptance
3. Seeking out the pleasant: treasure of pleasure
4. Holding both in broad awareness: open heart
5. Connecting to the common humanity of experience: Connection
6. Choice (the behavioural implications of practicing steps 1-5)

Three key features of this domain:

1. language is clear, precise, accurate and accessible whilst conveying spaciousness
2. the teacher guides the practice in a way which makes the key learning for each practice available to participants
3. the particular elements to consider when guiding each practice are appropriately present

Guidance notes on feature (1) are offered under ‘language’ below. Guidance notes for features (2) and (3) are tailored to specific meditations and are given below with a box for each practice on feature (2) (key learning specific to the practice) and feature (3) (elements to consider in guiding the practice).

Key Feature 1: language is clear, precise, accurate and accessible while also allowing for spaciousness

- Accessibility - i.e. using everyday language and avoiding jargon.
- Using words evoking different senses to support a range of different ways of experiencing the sensations – feeling, seeing or hearing them – e.g. ‘feeling’, ‘in the mind’s eye’, ‘listening to the messages from...’; some words are general across senses, e.g. ‘noticing’, ‘experiencing’, ‘sensing’.

All practices are guided in a way that includes:

1. Accurate and precise instructions on where to place attention (described below in relation to each practice)
2. Working with unpleasant sensations
3. Appreciating pleasant sensations
4. Working with thoughts
5. The attitudes to cultivate while doing the practice

Offering guidance on working with thoughts:

Being clear that thoughts are a normal function of the mind; i.e. our intention is not to keep the attention one pointedly on the breath but to become aware of our thoughts and emotions as we repeatedly invite the attention back to the breath. So our 'job' is not to stop the mind thinking but to work in a particular way when we become aware of thoughts. This way is to:

- acknowledge the thought and let it go
- gently and kindly bring attention back to the breath
- do this again and again, kindly and without judgement
- if the thought is emotionally charged, spend some time attending to the physical sensations (usually some kind of contraction or tension) associated with the thought and then return to the breath

Offering spaces of silence for participants to practice independently with periodical reminders; the length of silence can increase with the experience of the group.

Offering guidance on the attitudinal qualities to cultivate:

Be attentive to the presence/absence of:

- Guidance on the spirit to bring to the practice. Inviting gentleness, lightness of touch, curiosity about the experiences unfolding; balancing gentleness with a firmness of intention; taking care of self; letting go of judgement and self-criticism.
- Encouraging non-striving by reminding participants about letting go of needing / wanting to 'do' anything. E.g. "allowing experience to be as it is"; "seeing if the breath breathes itself and simply bringing awareness to the experience of this".
- Avoiding language which might feed into a sense of striving – words such as 'trying', 'working', 'seeing if you can...' can be unhelpful.
- Spaciousness – balancing silence with guidance, and using language economically.
- Using invitational language (attending, bringing awareness' etc.) to reduce resistance.
- Sometimes using 'the' rather than 'your' – e.g. 'the breath' – to encourage participants to be less identified with the body. This requires flexibility in the use of language depending on which client group one is working with. (Some groups may benefit from being more identified with the body, some less so).

Key Features 2 and 3:

The teacher guides the practice in a way that makes the key learning for each practice available to participants. The particular elements to consider when guiding each practice are appropriately present. The teacher is thoroughly familiar with the Breathworks meditations and has absorbed and embodied these sufficiently to be able to guide from their own experience.

Please see meditation scripts in the appendix of the Breathworks Training Programme Student Manual for detailed meditation guidance notes.

Domain 5: Conveying course themes through interactive enquiry and didactic teaching

Overview: Effective mindfulness teaching includes explicitly drawing out key concepts while at other times allowing them to emerge implicitly within the learning process. Mindfulness teachers skilfully guide enquiry, facilitate group dialogue, use stories and poems, facilitate group exercises, orient participants to session/course themes, and use didactic teaching.

Mindfulness teachers support participants to become aware of their secondary suffering and offer an embodiment of a potential way of being and working with experience beyond the programme. The teacher demonstrates skilful and creative use of a range of different methods of teaching. Participants' difficulties (e.g., avoidance, distress, emotional reactivity) in sessions are crucial opportunities to draw out key concepts.

Five key features need to be considered in assessing this domain:

1. experiential learning – the teacher supports participants to notice and describe their direct experience and to bring kindness and compassion to it; teaching themes are consistently linked to this direct experience and to developing kindness and compassion towards it.
2. use of enquiry - the teacher helps participants connect to their direct experience, reflect on direct experience, and link both to wider learning, with a predominant focus on process rather than content. The teacher also invites the participants to bring a warm and friendly interest to their experience, and self-compassion when they are suffering.
3. conveying learning – through linking new material to the experience of participants.
4. teaching skills – the learning is communicated through clear, participatory, playful, alive, responsive teaching process.
5. fluency – teacher conveys ease, familiarity with and confident knowledge of key concepts.

Key feature 1: experiential learning

The teacher supports participants to notice and describe their direct experience and to bring kindness and compassion to it; teaching themes are consistently linked to this direct experience and to developing kindness and compassion towards it.

The teaching process is experiential and supports participants to connect with their direct experience (with a particular emphasis on sensations in the body) and uses this experiential 'data' as a starting point for exploration and learning. When the dialogue moves into conceptualisations, the teacher quickly leads the participants back towards connection with immediate experience. Participants are given opportunities to become aware of and discriminate the different elements of direct experience – sensations, thoughts, feelings – both reflecting on how they arose in a mindfulness practice and connecting with them now as they arise in the

moment. The teacher also invites participants to bring a warm and friendly attitude to their experience, and self-compassion to it if and when they are suffering.

Style of questioning/dialoguing in mindfulness-based teaching includes:

- Use of open questions, rather than closed questions which only require a “yes” or “no” answer
- Questions/statements that open space – “would you be willing to tell me more?”; ‘hows?’ and ‘whats?’ rather than ‘whys?’
- Avoiding questions/statements that close/fill the space – e.g. yes/no, fixing/solutions, self stories
- Attentive and positive non-verbals
- Alternating questions and statements
- Opening the space – creating and recognising possibilities
- Sensing when enquiry is appropriate in group discussions – sometimes a question needs an answer, sometimes enquiry, sometimes nothing but ‘thank you’ or a smile
- Humility – the other person is the expert in their own experience (Blacker, Stahl & Meleo-Meyer, 2006)

Key feature 2: use of enquiry

The teacher helps participants connect to their direct experience, reflect on direct experience, and link both to wider learning, with a focus on process rather than content.

Please see the hand-out on enquiry for more information on how to address this key feature.

Key feature 3: conveying learning

The mindfulness teacher links new material to the experience of participants.

The challenge for the mindfulness teacher is to know the key concepts thoroughly so that they are readily available during didactic teaching and can also inform direction and emphasis within the teaching process. The majority of the material for exploration within the group comes from the participants rather than the teacher – but it is also the teacher’s responsibility to bring in key concepts to inform and add context and understanding.

Key feature 4: teaching skills

The learning is communicated through clear, participatory, playful, alive, responsive teaching process

- Concise and clear – the teaching is communicated in a way that is appropriate to the time allocated and is accessible to the learner.
- Participatory – the teaching integrates multiple learning styles and engages learners of the levels of thinking, sensing and feeling.

- Didactic teaching - participants are invited to draw on their own direct experience in relating to key concepts. The teacher works with participants to link direct observations of experience to learning relevant to the participant and to the aims of the programme. Didactic teaching is brief and clear, engages all elements of experiencing (thinking, sensing and feeling) and encourages interactive responses from participants' own experience.
- Playful, alive and responsive – the teaching is engaging and inspiring; the participants and the teacher work together to creatively explore key concepts; it is a highly 'in the moment process' – the teacher draws on what is arising in the moment rather than following a script; the teacher supports participants in finding meaning in the material based on how it relates to their direct experience; the teacher helps students to not get stuck in their stories, and instead keeps the focus on immediate experience. Enactments are used to support students in engaging with key concepts kinaesthetically.
- Use of teaching aids – the teacher uses flip chart or other teaching aids appropriately (the provision of appropriate teaching aids is assessed in Domain 1 Coverage, pacing and organisation of session curriculum; the use of these aids is assessed here). The teacher uses other sources e.g., stories, poetry and quotations, which point to other ways of experiencing.

Key feature 5: fluency

The teacher conveys ease, familiarity with and confident knowledge of key concepts.

- Ease – the teacher is clearly at home within the key concepts.
- Familiarity – the teacher clearly knows what they are teaching, and is able to move around flexibly within its territory.
- Confidence in the teaching process – the teacher shares their knowledge and experience and so inspires confidence.

Domain 6: Holding the group learning environment

Overview: The group process in a mindfulness course supports participants to connect with the common human experiences being explored. The teacher creates an effective learning environment through:

- managing group safety, trust and boundary issues
- taking into account the needs of both the individual and the group
- using the group process to draw out common human experiences
- managing the various phases of group formation, development and ending. The teacher is able to connect with and respond to changes within the group.

Four key features of this domain:

1. **learning environment** – creating and sustaining a rich atmosphere for learning, made safe through establishing group agreements, boundaries and confidentiality, while also allowing participants to explore and take risks
2. **group development** – clear management of group development processes over the duration of the course –in particular management of beginnings, challenges from within the group and endings
3. **common humanity** – moving from personal to universal learning – the teacher consistently opens the learning process towards connection with the commonality of key concepts and processes
4. **leadership style** - demonstrating authority without imposing the teacher’s views on participants

Key Feature 1: learning environment

The mindfulness teacher creates and sustains a rich atmosphere for learning, made safe through establishing ground rules, boundaries and confidentiality, while also allowing participants to explore and take risks

The teacher’s role within this is to create the conditions for learning to take place. This requires attention to both creating a place of safety and a place in which participants can engage in an exploration of themselves in new ways.

The teacher establishes safety by being sensitive to how participants may feel as part of the group. For example, s/he responds appropriately to difference and to competition within the group, holding boundaries while being non-judgemental and curious. S/he effectively manages issues of inclusion, belonging and control. Group safety is also attended to in the following ways:

- group boundaries are established and maintained (e.g. “let me know if you can’t come / arrive on time / attend each week”).
- confidentiality is established and maintained, and any issues appropriately addressed
- the intention of the group is made clear.
- digressions away from the core intention of the group and group agreements are addressed.
- participants are encouraged to adopt towards each other the attitudes that are being cultivated within the group (respect for each other’s contributions, stepping back from giving each other advice).
- a range of different experiences are invited – pleasant or unpleasant. This cultivates a sense that there is room in the group for all experience to be safely explored.

Key feature 2: group development

The mindfulness teacher clearly manages group development processes over the duration of the course – in particular beginnings, challenges from within the group and endings.

The teacher deliberately works with and responds to group development processes with appropriate management of beginnings, including establishing safety, group agreements, confidentiality, etc. both at the beginning and as appropriate as the group develops. The teacher supports the group by turning towards and working with difficulty within the group. The teacher also pays particular attention to endings by preparing for the end of the group from session six onwards, or session three in a four-session format, allowing space to acknowledge the impact of ending, exploring experiences/concerns relating to the end of the group, and attending to on-going needs.

Key feature 3: common humanity

The mindfulness teacher helps participants move from personal to universal learning, consistently opening the learning process towards connection with the commonality of key concepts and processes.

The teacher deliberately uses the group process to highlight the common experience of the human mind. The teacher takes opportunities to normalise experience within the group. Enquiry is an engagement with an individual within the context of a group of participants. The teacher needs to balance these processes, drawing out from the specifics of the individual the more common themes that might relate to participants more broadly. Skilful teaching will involve moving between responding to the individual and relating the learning to the wider group – a movement from the personal to the universal.

An individual question might take the form of: “What is happening in your body now as you talk?” A group question might take the form of: “What do you all notice in your experience when...?” A movement from individual to group might take the form of: “Did any of you also experience what Sally is describing?”

The internal process of the teacher will include bringing awareness to the group process in order to respond to shifts in group energy and the prevailing moods (e.g. restlessness, anxiety) and make appropriate choices (e.g. about moving the group on, shifting focus, inserting a mindfulness practice, actively acknowledging felt experience in the group, etc.).

Key feature 4: leadership style

The mindfulness teacher demonstrates authority without imposing personal views on participants.

The leadership style of the teacher includes:

- purposefulness of intention (this is different from striving for particular outcomes).

- confidence and trust in the process of bringing mindful and compassionate attention to experience based on personal experience – through this s/he is able also to invite the trust of participants in engaging in this learning process.
- potency – the teacher carries influence and authority in a way which inspires the respect of participants while also encouraging them to trust in their own wisdom.
- authority – the teacher communicates confidence, while also supporting the group to trust in their own learning process and the wisdom they bring, rather than relying solely on the teacher as “expert”. The teacher’s authority communicates a clear sense of being thoroughly ‘at home’ within this process of learning. This is derived from: personal practice, psychological and spiritual development, and experience of teaching mindfulness. The teacher’s confidence frees participants to feel contained and safe and it can enable them to trust and open to the process. In order for the participants to be able to disclose and explore difficult material there must be both trust and confidence in the teacher.

Breathworks Teaching Development Competencies: Assessment Criteria (*)

Our hope in sharing this tool is to help students in the Breathworks training programme understand what it is they are training to become and on what basis they will be assessed as they progress through their training and accreditation process.

Domain 1: coverage, pacing, and organisation of class	Domain 2: Relational Skills	Domain 3: Embodiment of Mindfulness	Domain 4: Guiding mindfulness practices	Domain 5: Conveying course themes through interactive enquiry and didactic teaching	Domain 6: Holding the group learning environment
<p>Sufficient coverage of the key concepts and practices</p> <p>Flexibility, being responsive to the needs of the course participants</p> <p>Appropriateness of the themes and content (to the stage of the course and the individuals on the course)</p> <p>Organisation of teacher, materials, and room</p> <p>Pacing and flow of the class</p>	<p>Relating to course participants openly, honestly, and confidently</p> <p>Connection and acceptance - actively engaging with participants and their present moment experience, with compassion, acceptance and understanding</p> <p>Kindness and compassion - showing a warm and friendly interest in each course participant</p> <p>Curiosity and respect - being interested in course participants and their experience, while at the same time respecting their boundaries and need for privacy.</p> <p>Common Humanity Mutuality - engaging with the participants in a collaborative working relationship.</p>	<p>Present-moment awareness - embodied through behavior and how the teacher communicates through speech and body language</p> <p>Present moment responsiveness - to ones own experience while teaching</p> <p>Balance between relaxed and alert - simultaneously conveying steadiness, ease, non-reactivity, and alertness</p> <p>Attitudinal foundations: - the teacher's way of being embodies mindfulness</p> <p>Embodiment or Exemplification - the learning is communicated through the teacher's way of being</p>	<p>Establishing basic awareness: body scan and breathing anchor</p> <p>Turning towards the unpleasant: compassionate acceptance</p> <p>Seeking out the pleasant: treasure of pleasure</p> <p>Holding both in broad awareness: open awareness</p> <p>Choice: connection</p>	<p>Experiential learning – the teacher supports participants to notice and describe their direct experience and to bring kindness and compassion to it; teaching themes are consistently linked to this direct experience and to developing kindness and compassion towards it.</p> <p>Use of enquiry - the teacher helps participants connect to their direct experience, reflect on direct experience, and link both to wider learning, with a predominant focus on process rather than content. The teacher also invites the participants to bring a warm and friendly interest to their experience, and self-compassion when they are suffering.</p> <p>Conveying learning – through linking new material to the experience of participants</p> <p>Teaching skills – the learning is communicated through clear, participatory, playful, alive, responsive teaching process</p> <p>Fluency – teacher conveys ease, familiarity with and confident knowledge of key concepts</p>	<p>Learning environment – creating and sustaining a rich atmosphere for learning, made safe through establishing group agreements, boundaries and confidentiality, while also allowing participants to explore and take risks</p> <p>Group development – clear management of group development processes over the duration of the course – in particular management of beginnings, challenges from within the group and endings common humanity – moving from personal to universal</p> <p>Learning – the teacher consistently opens the learning process towards connection with the commonality of key concepts and processes</p> <p>Leadership style - demonstrating authority without imposing the teacher's views on participants</p>



(*)This document has been modified from the Mindfulness-based Interventions Teaching Assessment Criteria developed by Rebecca S. Crane, Judith G. Soulsby, Willem Kuyken, J.Mark G.Williams, and Catrin Eames. We offer our heartfelt thanks to them for pioneering this important work.