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MINDFULNESS-BASED INTERVENTIONS: TEACHING ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

(MBI:TAC)

Summary version

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of these assessment criteria is to enable the teaching of Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) to be assessed for adherence and competence.

The MBI:TAC was developed from 2008 in the context of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) programmes in the UK and, in this context, MBIs refers to these programmes. The development of the tool was led by Bangor University in collaboration with colleagues at the mindfulness centres at Exeter and Oxford Universities. The MBI:TAC is now being used, however, to review competence and adherence of other MBIs and, in some cases, the descriptors have been tailored to the adapted programme.

This 2021 version was created from a review with an eye towards trauma-sensitivity to more explicitly address trauma symptoms that may arise in response to meditation practice. Additionally, as MBI trainings make their way around the world, issues of diversity and global awareness require a broader perspective on how to assess competence and adherence across cultures, ethnicities, and a wide variety of populations.

This summary version is for ease of use once the full version has been assimilated.

The structure of the Teaching Assessment Criteria

The six domains of competence within the MBI:TAC:

Domain 1: Coverage, pacing and organisation of session curriculum

Domain 2: Relational skills

Domain 3: Embodying mindfulness

Domain 4: Guiding mindfulness practices

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

Domain 6: Holding the group learning environment

LEVELS OF COMPETENCE AND ADHERENCE IN MBI:TAC

(adapted from the Dreyfus Scale of Competence, 1986)

Competence band	Generic definition of overall competence level	Band
Incompetent The teaching demonstrates an absence of key features, highly inappropriate performance, or behaviour that is harmful.	Key features are not demonstrated. The teacher makes consistent errors and displays poor and unacceptable teaching, leading to likely or actual negative therapeutic consequences. There is no real evidence that the teacher has grasped the fundamentals of the MBI teaching process.	**1**
Beginner The teaching demonstrates basic building blocks of MBI competence in at least one feature.	At least one key feature in each domain is evident at competent level, but there are significant levels of inconsistency across all other key features. Across other key features, there is substantive scope for development, overall lack of consistency and many areas that require development to be considered adequate teaching. The teacher is beginning to develop some basic building blocks of MBI competence.	**2**
Advanced Beginner The teaching demonstrates evidence of competence in two key features in each domain. The participant's emotional and physical safety is well taken care of.	At least two key features are evident at a competent level in each domain, but there are one or more major problems in others. The teaching has scope for greater levels of consistency in competence across key features and domains. The teaching at a very basic level would be considered 'fit for practice.'	**3**
Competent Teaching is competent, with some problems and/or inconsistencies	All key features are mostly present in all domains at a competent level with possibly some good features, but some inconsistencies are present. The teacher demonstrates a workable level of competence and they are clearly 'fit for practice.'	**4**
Proficient Sustained competence demonstrated with few or minor problems and/or inconsistencies.	All key features are present in all domains, with very few and very minor inconsistencies, and there is evidence of good ability and skill. The teacher is able consistently to apply these skills over the range of aspects to MBI teaching.	**5**
Advanced Excellent teaching practice, or very good even in the face of participant difficulties.	All key features are present with evidence of considerable ability. The teaching is particularly inspirational, fluent and excellent. The teacher no longer uses rules, guidelines, or maxims. They have deep tacit understanding of the issues and are able to work in an original and flexible manner. The skills are demonstrated even in the face of difficulties (e.g., challenges from the group).	**6**

TRAINING PATHWAY TO LEARN TO USE THE MBI:TAC

The details of the training pathway (delivered online) can be viewed here:
http://mbitac.bangor.ac.uk/training.php.en.

Below is a summary of the three stages of training:

1 **Supporting the inner teacher with the MBI-TAC: Cultivating reflection, embodiment and competence**

► Identifying, describing and distinguishing the MBI:TAC domains as they show up throughout the curriculum

► learning to use the tool to support reflective development

► Building the foundation for using the tool in training, supervision and as an assessment tool

2 **Supporting others with the MBI-TAC: Cultivating competence in supervision, assessment and training**

► Learning to use the MBI:TAC to assess mindfulness-based teaching

► Developing skills for using it in training and supervision

► Developing skills in giving skillful feedback on teaching

3 **Supporting Integrity with the MBI-TAC: Cultivating reliability in the assessment process**

► Ensuring reliability for using the MBI:TAC in assessment

DOMAIN 1:

COVERAGE, PACING AND ORGANISATION OF SESSION CURRICULUM

This domain examines how well the teacher adequately addresses and covers the curriculum content of the session.

This involves creating a skilful balance between the needs of the individual, the group and the requirements of teaching the course. In addition, the teacher is well organised with relevant course materials, has teaching aids readily available and the room has been appropriately prepared for the group. The session is both well 'time managed' in relation to the curriculum and paced well with a sense of spaciousness, steadiness and lack of time pressure. Digressions are steered back into the session curriculum with tact and ease.

Key features to be considered when assessing this domain:

1 **Adherence** – The teacher adheres to the form of the programme, and covers the themes and curriculum content.

2 **Responsiveness and flexibility** – in adhering to the session curriculum.

3 **Appropriateness** – Appropriateness of the themes and content (taking into account the stage of the programme and experience of the participants).

4 **Organisation** – Level of organisation of the teacher, room and materials.

5 **Session flow** – The degree to which the session flows and is appropriately paced.

Please note

i Assessors must themselves have considerable direct teaching experience of the particular programme that is under review.

ii Assessor requires a written guide to the particular course curriculum that is being followed. If any adaptations to the curriculum have been made, the rationale for these must be clear to the assessor.

Incompetent

Session curriculum not covered or highly inappropriate.
No attempt was made to structure session time.
Session seemed aimless, overly rigid, or harmful.

Beginner

At least one of the five key features is present at a level that would be desirable for adequate MBI teaching, but significant levels of inconsistency exist across all key features.

Examples include: adequate coverage of the session theme, but to support participants' learning, the teaching needs to be more responsive to what is happening in the class, matched to the group/level and paced to be effective; curriculum has some relevant content, but there are significant omissions or inappropriate additions; sessions consistently rigid or very unstructured; themes consistently inappropriate for stage in course; teacher disorganised; and/or has significant problems with pacing or time management needs improvement (e.g., too slowly paced, too rapidly paced, time boundaries not adhered to).

Advanced Beginner

At least two of the five key features are present at a competent level, but difficulty and/or inconsistency is clearly evident in others.

Examples include: some skill is evidenced in maintaining the form of the programme or covering the curriculum shown, but significant curriculum elements are missing or a curriculum element which is not part of session is introduced without clear rationale; at times rigid or overly unstructured; content and curriculum themes mostly appropriate but with some problems (i.e., teacher at times introducing an appropriate theme but at a suboptimum stage in the course); teacher sometimes disorganised; problems with pacing or time management at times (e.g., too slowly paced, too rapidly paced, time boundaries not adhered to).

Competent

All key features present to a good level of skill with some minor inconsistencies.

Examples include: appropriate curriculum reasonably well covered; teacher used time effectively by tactfully limiting peripheral and unproductive discussion and/or by pacing the session appropriately for the group; content of curriculum themes largely appropriate; and teacher mostly well organised.

Proficient

All key features consistently present.

Examples include: appropriate curriculum and form of programme clearly evidenced, well covered and adhered to with ease and spaciousness; evidence of balanced allocation of time; teacher maintained appropriate control over flow of dialogue and pacing of session; content and themes highly appropriate; appropriate level of flexibility in making curriculum choices; good level of organisation.

Advanced

All key features present to a high skill level.

Examples include: excellent coverage, pacing and organisation of session curriculum; particularly high degree of flexibility, responsiveness, spaciousness and appropriate pacing while at the same time thoroughly addressing the key curriculum themes for the session. Difficult for reviewer to feed back any 'learning needs.'

DOMAIN 2:
RELATIONAL SKILLS

Mindfulness-based teaching is highly relational in that the practices themselves help us develop a new relationship both with ourselves and our experience.

The qualities that the teacher brings to participants and the teaching process mirror the qualities that participants are learning to bring to themselves. Mindfulness is the awareness that emerges through paying attention to experience in a particular way: on purpose (the teacher is deliberate and focused when relating to participants in the sessions); in the present moment (the teacher has the intention to be whole heartedly present with participants); and non-judgmentally (the teacher brings a spirit of interest, deep respect and acceptance to participants) (Kabat-Zinn, 1990).

Key features to be considered when assessing this domain:

1 **Authenticity and potency** – Relating in a way which seems genuine, honest and confident.

2 **Connection and acceptance** – Actively attending to and connecting with participants and their present moment experience and conveying back an accurate and empathic understanding of this.

3 **Compassion and warmth** – Conveying a deep awareness, sensitivity, appreciation and openness to participants' experience.

4 **Curiosity and respect** – Conveying genuine interest in each participant and their experience while respecting each participant's vulnerabilities, boundaries and need for privacy.

5 **Mutuality** – Engaging with the participants in a mutual and collaborative working relationship.

Please note

i The relational aspect to mindfulness teaching is particularly related to **Domain 3** (Embodying mindfulness).

ii The intention in **Domain 2** is to encompass those parts of the process that rely on the interpersonal connection between individual participants and teacher.

Incompetent

Teacher has poor relational and interpersonal skills.

Examples include: consistently 'missing the point' of what participants are communicating; aspects of the interpersonal process are destructive.

Beginner

At least one of the five key features is present at a level desirable for adequate MBI teaching, but there are significant levels of inconsistency across all key features. At times, the relational process is unsafe or harmful for participants.

Examples include: acceptance of participants not demonstrated; lack of attuned attention; lack of sensitivity to participant vulnerability; teacher putting themselves outside the process.

Advanced Beginner

At least two of the five key features are present at a competent level, but difficulty and/or inconsistency is clearly evident in others. Participants' safety is not compromised and there are no aspects of the relational process that are destructive to participants.

Example includes: teacher's style at times impedes their ability to establish a relationship that enables engaged exploration (i.e., lack of connection, responsiveness, curiosity not conveyed, hesitant style, intellectualisation, and judgemental tone).

Competent

All key features are present to a good level of skill with some minor inconsistencies.

Examples include: effective working relationships are generally formed with participants; teacher's relational style mostly facilitates participants to feel at ease, accepted and appreciated; teacher is confidently attentive to and interested in participants; teacher appropriately brings themselves into the learning process (mutuality).

Proficient

All key features are consistently present with few minor inconsistencies.

Examples include: teacher demonstrates very good relational skills and is strongly attuned to participants; the interactions are sensitive, responsive and respectful; excellent collaborative, mutual working relationships are formed; participants' boundaries and vulnerabilities are sensitively respected; teacher creates a relational process that allows participants to engage deeply with their learning.

Advanced

All key features present to a high skill level.

Examples include: teacher demonstrates excellent relational effectiveness with a keen grasp of the participants' world; teacher consistently shows good levels of collaboration, compassion, openness, warmth, acceptance and responsiveness to participants. Difficult for reviewer to feed back any 'learning needs'.

DOMAIN 3:
EMBODYING MINDFULNESS
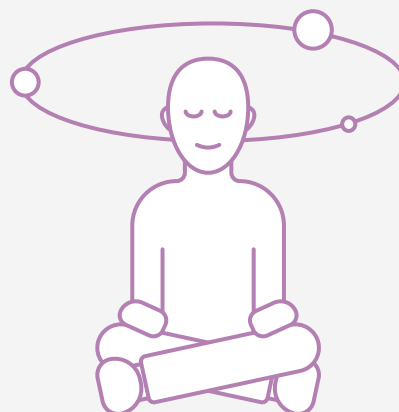
The teacher inhabits the practice of mindfulness. This is particularly conveyed through the teacher's body in terms of their physical and non-verbal expression.

Embodying mindfulness involves the teacher sustaining connection and responsiveness to moment-by-moment arising (within self, within individuals and within the group), and bringing the core attitudinal foundations of mindfulness practice to all of this. These attitudes are non-judging, patience, beginner's mind, trust, non-striving, acceptance, and letting go, generosity and gratitude.

Key features to be considered when assessing this domain:

1 **Focus** – Present moment focus expressed through behaviour and non-verbal communication.

2 **Responsiveness** – Present moment responsiveness, working with the emergent moment with spaciousness and ease.

3 **Steadiness and vitality** – the teacher simultaneously conveys calm, ease, non-reactivity and alertness.

4 **Allowing** – the teacher brings forth qualities of non-judging, patience, trusting, accepting and non-striving.

5 **Natural presence** – the teacher's behaviour is natural and authentic to their own intrinsic mode of operating.

Please note

i Assessment of present moment awareness of and responsiveness to coverage and pacing of **the teaching process** is assessed in **Domain 1** (Coverage, pacing and organisation of session curriculum), and **the group process** is assessed in **Domain 6** (Holding the group learning environment).

ii The qualities of mindfulness are conveyed throughout the whole teaching process. This domain intends to capture how these qualities are conveyed 'implicitly' through the teachers' non-verbal presence and how they hold themselves within the teaching process.

Incompetent

Embodiment of mindfulness is not conveyed.

Examples include: absence of present moment focus/responsiveness. Attitudinal qualities of mindfulness are not in evidence and those that are conveyed have the potential for harm.

Beginner

At least one of the five key features is present at a level that would be desirable for adequate MBI teaching, but significant levels of inconsistency exist across all key features.

Examples include: lack of consistent present moment focus/responsiveness; teacher not calm, at ease and alert; attitudinal qualities often not clearly in evidence; teacher's manner conveys restlessness and unease; teacher does not seem 'at home' in themselves or in the space.

Advanced Beginner

At least two of the five key features are present at a competent level, but difficulty and/or inconsistency is clearly evident in others; participants' safety is not compromised; no aspects of the embodied process is destructive to participants.

Examples include: teacher evidences embodiment of several principles of mindfulness practice within the teaching process, but there is a lack of consistency (i.e., teacher demonstrates some skilful present moment internal and external connectedness but this is not sustained throughout); the teacher might seem 'steady' but there is a lack of vitality in the space or vice versa; teacher's bodily expression at times conveys qualities that are different from mindfulness (e.g., a sense of hurry, agitation and/or striving).

Competent

All key features present to a good level of skill with some minor inconsistencies.

Examples include: teacher generally demonstrates an ability to communicate the attitudinal qualities of mindfulness practice through their bodily presence and is mostly present moment focused/responsive; teacher mostly seems natural and at ease.

Proficient

All key features consistently present with a good level of skill.

Examples include: sustained levels of present moment focus through the teaching and demonstration of the range of attitudinal qualities of mindfulness throughout with very minor inconsistencies; the bodily expression of the teacher implicitly conveys the qualities of mindfulness; teacher is natural and at ease; teacher is authentic both to themselves and to the qualities of mindfulness.

Advanced

All key features present to a high-skill level.

Examples include: teacher demonstrates exceptionally high levels of awareness of and responsiveness to the present moment throughout the teaching process; teacher has high levels of internal and external connectedness; teacher has attitudinal qualities of mindfulness present in a particularly inspiring way; teacher is highly authentic both to themselves and to the qualities of mindfulness. Difficult for reviewer to find further 'learning needs' to feedback.

DOMAIN 4:
GUIDING MINDFULNESS PRACTICES

The teacher offers guidance that describes accurately what the participant is being invited to do in the practice, and includes all the elements required in that practice.

The teacher's guidance enables participants to relate skilfully to mind wandering (seeing this as a natural mind process, working gently but firmly to cultivate the skill to recognise when the mind has wandered and to bring the attention back). In addition, their guidance suggests the attitudes to bring to oneself and one's experience throughout the practice. The practices offer a balance of spaciousness and precision. Skilful use of language is key to conveying all this.

Key features to be considered when assessing this domain:

1   **Language** – Language is clear, precise, accurate and accessible while conveying spaciousness.

2   **Key learning** - The teacher guides the practice in a way that makes the key learning for each practice available to participants (see checklists for each practice in the manual).

3   **Particular elements** - The teacher considers the particular elements for each practice while guiding (see checklists for each practice in the manual). These include practical issues, and safety and trauma considerations.

Please note ....

i   The embodiment of mindfulness is a crucial underpinning to practice guidance and should be assessed under **Domain 3** (Embodying mindfulness). The way in which mindfulness is conveyed implicitly through the body qualities of the teacher is also assessed in Domain 3 – embodying. The language used to convey the qualities of mindfulness, however, is assessed here.

ii   This is the only domain that covers a particular 'curriculum element' and is thus structured differently. The key features link to specific learning intentions, and the guiding considerations for the each of the core practices are detailed here in the manual. 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 3 (key learning specific to the practice) and feature 3 (elements to consider in guiding the practice).

Incompetent

Guidance is inaccurate and unclear. Key feature(s) of guiding practices are absent. The guidance offers an unsafe holding atmosphere.

Beginner

At least one of the three key features is present at a level that would be desirable for adequate MBI teaching, but significant levels of inconsistency exist across all key features.

Examples include: teacher attempts to offer guidance in an appropriate way, but significant errors, gaps and inconsistencies exist; language is imprecise and does not invite spaciousness; working with mind wandering is not skilfully guided (i.e.,, it is seen as a problem).

Advanced Beginner

At least two of the three key features are present at a competent level, but difficulty and/or inconsistency is clearly evident in others. Adequate care is taken of participants' emotional and physical safety.

Examples include: some guidance offered clearly, accurately and appropriately, but language conveys a sense of striving for results; key learning from practice inconsistently available to participants; elements to consider when guiding each practice are inconsistently adhered to.

Competent

All key features present to a good level of skill with some minor inconsistencies.

Examples include: guidance is generally clear and accurate, but slight lack of precision; sense of spaciousness not conveyed and/or language not always invitational; key learning from practice mostly available to participants; elements to consider when guiding each practice are mostly adhered to.

Proficient

All key features consistently present with a good level of skill.

Examples include: practice guidance is good, conveying both precision and spaciousness; elements to consider in guiding are clearly integrated; key learning for practice is available to participants through the guidance.

Advanced

All key features present to a high skill level.

Examples include: exceptionally skilful guidance with all features consistently present with very good level of skill. Creative and inspiring guidance on working with physical and emotional 'edges' and boundaries. Difficult for reviewer to find further 'learning needs' to feedback.

DETAILED EXPLANATION OF THE FIVE KEY FEATURES OF DOMAIN 4

Guiding of mindfulness practices offers an opportunity to integrate teaching on the cultivation of mindfulness, and space for participants to experience and experiment with the process for themselves.

Given the subtlety of the messages being conveyed and the paradox inherent within these, great delicateness and sensitivity is needed when guiding. 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).

GUIDANCE FOR KEY FEATURE 1:

Language is clear, precise, accurate, audible and accessible while conveying spaciousness

> ## General points:
>
> **Accessibility**, i.e., using everyday/ordinary language and avoiding mindfulness jargon/ esoteric language. Mindfulness guidance is delivered in a rate and rhythm that may be slower than conversational speech yet is not hypnotic or trancelike.
>
> **Using words** belonging to different senses to support the range of experiencing sensations, such as feeling, seeing or hearing them (e.g., use sense words such as 'feeling', 'in the mind's eye', 'listening to the messages from'; some words are general across senses, e.g., 'noticing', 'experiencing', 'sensing').

Within key feature 1 (language guidance) there are three sub-areas relating to guidance, including:

1. Guidance on where to place attention (further detail can be found within the various practices that are listed in the next pages)

The teacher's guidance regarding where to place attention should be as accurate and precise as possible, i.e., clear articulation of what the participant is specifically being invited to do with their attention.

2. Guidance on working with mind wandering

The teacher's guidance should make it clear that mind wandering is a natural part of the process; i.e., our intention is not to keep the attention solely pointed on whatever object of awareness has been chosen, but to become aware of the activities of our mind as we repeatedly invite the attention back to one particular place. So our 'job' is not to stop the mind wandering, but to work in a particular way when we become aware that it has wandered.

The teacher should:

- Acknowledge that the attention has wandered;

- Bring attention back to the object of awareness (with an emphasis on kindness and gentleness but also with firmness);

- Do this again and again (with ease and non-judgement, and kindly recognising when constriction and judgement is present);

- Offer spaces of silence for participants to practice independently with periodical reminders. The length of silence can increase with the experience of the group.

3. Guidance on the attitudinal qualities to cultivate.

It is important to remember that the language used to convey the qualities of mindfulness is assessed here. The way in which mindfulness is conveyed implicitly through the body qualities of the teacher, however, is assessed in Domain 3 (embodying).

When reviewing the teaching be attentive to the presence or absence within practice guidance of the following themes:

- Is there guidance on the spirit to bring to the practice? Does the teacher invite gentleness, lightness of touch, and curiosity about experience? Does the teacher balance gentleness with firmness of intention whilst emphasising self-care?

- Does the teacher encourage non-striving by reminding participants about letting go of needing/wanting to 'do' anything, e.g., 'allowing experience to be as it is'; 'allowing the breath to breathe itself'; and 'simply bringing awareness to the experience of this.'

- Does the teacher avoid using language that might feed into a sense of striving? E.g., words such as 'trying,' 'working,' 'seeing if you can…' can be unhelpful.

- Does the teacher avoid language that indicates the practice will be a certain way? E.g., that the yoga is enjoyable, or that the mind or the body will relax (in general, avoid the use of the word relax, since we are not engaging in practice to relax or get anywhere in particular), or that the practice will lead to peace.

- Does the teacher create a sense of spaciousness? E.g., by balancing silence with guidance, and using language economically.

- Does the teacher use present participles (e.g., attending, bringing awareness,' etc.) to convey a feeling of guiding/ inviting rather than ordering, and to reduce resistance.

- Does the teacher sometimes using 'the' rather than 'your' (e.g., 'the breath' – to encourage participants to be less identified with the body).

GUIDANCE FOR KEY FEATURES 2 & 3:

Key feature 2: the teacher guides the practice in a way which makes the key learning for each practice available to participants

Key feature 3: the particular elements to consider when guiding each practice are appropriately present

Guidance on these two key features are now offered below in relation to each meditation practice.

Raisin/eating meditation

Making key learning available through practice guidance and within the inquiry (Key feature 2):

- The practice supports experiencing the difference between mindful awareness and automatic pilot. If we are on autopilot, we cannot see our moods change, or notice stress rising. The raisin practice can help us realise that there are other things to be seen, that there is more to life than our preferences, preconceptions, deductions, opinions and theories; that slowing down even the most routine activities might transform them; and that paying attention to our experience in this 'curious', interested, and open way may show us aspects of our experience that we had not seen before.

- The practice offers an experience of bringing attention to direct experience, which in turn can reveal new perceptions potentially transforming the way we relate to ordinary events and behaviours.

- The practice reveals that the present is the only time we have to know anything. The way we ate this raisin is very different to habitual ways of eating. Our impulses around food are often unconscious, powerful, and uncontrolled. Mindfulness practice allows us to see this more clearly.

- The practice highlights how the mind wanders. The mind is always making associations from present-moment experience to memories, deeper level understanding, stories, etc., but we are not usually aware of this. Mostly we do not choose where our mind goes. We see how difficult mind states easily take hold when we are unaware. Analysing the past and worrying about the future can be 'second nature' to us.

- Eating is an ordinary activity and so the practice demonstrates that mindfulness meditation is not a specialized or lofty activity—but quite ordinary and available at any moment.

Elements to consider in guiding (Key feature 3):

- Take care with hygiene: use a spoon, a clean bowl, and new box of raisins. Pour out raisins in front of participants. Have kitchen paper to hand.

- Offer the option not to eat raisin, and to explore with other senses.

- Choose to offer participants just one raisin, or two or three. There is the potential to guide the first one interactively as a group by inviting them to call out sensing words, which can give a flavour of what is being asked for; with the next one, you can ask them to eat it in silence with you guiding; the next one can be in silence completely with no guidance (if only one, ask them to eat in silence with you guiding).

- Invite participants to let go of knowing that this is a raisin, and instead to see it 'fresh' as a child first encounters experience.

- Emphasise the attitudes of curiosity, interest, and exploration, as a scientist might investigate.

- Give permission and options to adapt or step out of the practice.

Body Scan

Making key learning available through guidance (Key feature 2):

- Direct experiential knowing of physical sensations;

- Learning to be intentional about how we pay attention;

- Relating skilfully to mind wandering when it occurs (acknowledging and bringing back);

- Discovering new ways to handle difficulties (sleepiness, discomfort, etc.) by taking care of self (making personal choices). Not seeing difficulties as a problem;

- Learning to bring kindly attention to the body, being present to how things are moment-by-moment, without needing to change things, no goals to be achieved, no right way for the body to feel;

- Learning to notice and relate differently to sensations and mental states, including boredom, irritation, impulses, etc.

Elements to consider in guiding (Key feature 3):

- The teacher should adopt a position where they can monitor the room for safety, track participants, be audible, whilst also being in touch with their own body scan practice;

- Begin by offering postural options: lying down, astronaut, sitting or standing. Include options to open eyes, shift position (specially to avoid a sense of being frozen or having to lie still). It may be comforting and protective to have a blanket;

- Start and end by bringing attention to the whole body;

- Pay particular attention to detail of body sensations; give examples of words describing sensations such as warm, cold, heaviness, tingling, numbness, ease or lightness;

- Give options to come back to a neutral anchor/to open the eyes at any time to stabilise attention or to take care of self if there is a sense of overwhelm; remind them of this during the practice;

- Allow the absence of particular feelings or sensations to be just as important as their presence;

- Instruct participants to let go of the last body region before moving awareness to the next, or clearly communicate continuity of awareness as attention is shifted to the next region;

- Be precise in guiding where and how participants place attention, with careful language that also allows choice, e.g., 'if you care to…' 'seeing what it's like to attend now…'.

- Vary instructions between both narrow angle, detailed awareness of a small part of the body, and wider angle awareness of a larger area of the body such as the trunk, or the whole body;

- Periodically through the practice offer guidance on dealing with mind wandering. Acknowledge that thoughts and emotions may be evoked; there's no need to push these away. Simply return to the area of the body that is being explored;

- Include recognition that sensations change: they are coming and going, staying a while, intensifying, dissolving— sometimes subtly, sometimes more strongly;

- Offer guidance that invites participants to move into a direct 'being with' body sensations rather than looking at them from a distance;

- Balance guidance that gives the flavour of being with, allowing and accepting, alongside that which gives a flavour of exploration, curiosity, aliveness, and adventure.

Sitting meditation

(NB form/length of this practice evolves through the sessions/programme in specific ways. Assessing the fidelity of practice form, and the alignment of the practice with the intentions of the session is addressed in Domain 1)

Making key learning available through guidance (Key feature 2):

- Anchoring to the present moment through body sensations, sound, or other specific foci;

- Dealing skilfully with mind-wandering ;

- Learning gentleness, encouraging curiosity, learning acceptance;

- Noticing a mindful 'feel of things' (pleasant/unpleasant/neutral), and reactions to these;

- Noticing aversion, the 'unwanted';

- Continuing the development of flexibility of attention (from body scan): widening/narrowing the lens of attention;

- Mindfulness of the natural flux of experience;

- Cultivating being fully with experience and having an observer stance simultaneously;

- Learning to receive experience as it is, distinct from mental labels, stories about it, etc.;

- Learning to see recurring patterns in the mind and how they develop, play out, etc.;

- Seeing more deeply into the nature of human experience;

- Learning to take care of oneself: e.g., by recognizing overwhelm or 'zoning out'. Responding by changing position, opening eyes, bringing energy with a deeper and more deliberate breath, or stopping/changing the practice.

Elements to consider in guiding (Key feature 3):

Posture

- Give practical information on helpful posture using a chair, stool, cushion to establish the intention of the practice and to facilitate the transition into this period of deliberate cultivation of 'being mode';'

Anchor

- Anchoring in the present moment using a specific aspect of experience. Give guidance on choosing a reliable, accessible, neutral anchor – e.g., feet, hands, touchpoints (hips and seat), breath, or sound. Offer participants many opportunities over the sessions to see the impact of various anchors;

- Use language that encourages direct connection with the anchor rather than thinking about it;

Body sensations

- Transition from the anchor - expand the attention around the sensations of the anchor (or from the ears/sound) to an awareness of sensations in the body as a whole;

- Offer explicit guidance about how/where to place attention;

- Offer clear guidance on options for working with discomfort/pain/intensity that arise from either physical or emotional origins;

Sounds

- Receiving sounds as they come and go; listening to sounds as sounds (e.g., noticing loudness, tone, length, etc.); recognising sounds as events in the mind; and noticing layers of meaning added to the direct experience of sounds;

Thoughts and emotions

- Relating to thoughts similarly to how we relate to sounds –arising and passing away;

- Seeing recurring patterns and how these develop and play out within the mind;

- Using metaphors to help point towards what is being invited here (e.g., seeing thoughts as clouds in the spaciousness of the sky);

- Acknowledging challenge (not setting up a specific idea of how we 'should' see thoughts;

- Using the anchor to return to when the mind becomes unsettled or attention feels lost;

- Expanding attention to include emotions; sensing the physical sensations that are part of the emotion;

Mindfulness of the full range of experience
(i.e., choiceless or open awareness)

- Bringing an open attention to whatever is arising/predominant moment by moment in the breath, body, thoughts, sounds, emotions, etc.;

- Noticing recurring patterns in the body and mind;

- Coming back to the chosen anchor as often as is needed.

Mindful movement

Making the key learning available through guidance (Key feature 2):

- Building on the foundation of the body scan to learn how we can bring awareness to and directly inhabit bodily experience/sensation;

- Experiencing awareness of the body in motion, as it often is in life;

- Relating to the body with friendliness;

- Learning that movements and postures offer an embodiment of life experiences and processes;

- Seeing habitual tendencies play out;

- Working with physical boundaries/intensity in a way that parallels working with emotional experience; experiencing how physical movement can change emotional experience;

- Learning and experiencing working with present moment acceptance, including physical limitations, and learning to relate in new ways to pain - no 'perfect' pose, nothing to strive for; rather is it possible to respond to this body and its needs today, with wonder and gentleness?;

- Learning new ways of taking care of ourselves.

Elements to consider in guiding (Key feature 3):

Ensuring that participants engage in the practices in ways that are safe and respectful to their body is a major consideration in guiding movement practices, including:

- Giving clear and precise guidance on ways of working with physical boundaries at the beginning of the practice;

- Interspersing the practice with reminders about working within safe limits for their body in this moment;

- Offering guidance in particular on:

  » Potential adaptations for postures as they are taught;

  » Reminders to hold postures for the amount of time that is right for each participant regardless of how long the teacher or others hold a posture;

  » Reminders that it is OK not to do a posture and either to do something different, or to sit/lie and possibly to visualise the body doing the posture;

- Encouraging participants to err on the side of caution;

- Encouraging participants to listen to the wisdom of their own body and allow this to override any guidance you may be giving;

- Reminding participants not to be competitive with themselves or others;

Breath guidance:
Helpful guidance regarding the breath, including:

- Encouraging participants to breath fully and freely in whatever way feels most natural as they move;

- Guidance on relaxing into postures and breathing with or into regions of greatest intensity;

Ensuring that guidance is given in ways that invite detailed awareness of moment-by-moment experience, includin:

- Encouraging participants to explore and discover the creative edge between exploring / investigating / discovering and accepting / letting be / being with;

- Giving plenty of space within and between postures to enable detailed noticing;

- Using precise language so that participants can focus inwardly rather needing to look at the teacher.

The three step breathing space (3SBS)

Three step breathing space
– making key learning available through guidance (Key feature 2):

The learning is encapsulated within the three steps of the practice. Each step needs to be clearly conveyed. Prepare by stepping out of automatic pilot, then commence the three steps:

- **Step 1. Awareness** – Recognising and acknowledging all of one's current experience (thoughts, emotions, sensations).

- **Step 2. Gathering** – Bringing the attention to the sensations within an anchor point in a particular place in the body (e.g., breath, feet, hands etc).

- **Step 3. Expanding** - Expanding the attention into the body as a whole: whilst staying in touch with the particular sensations of the anchor, open to the range of experience being perceived across the body.

Elements to consider in guiding (Key feature 3):

Guidance on posture – communicate the effect of coming to an upright and dignified posture. If this is not possible (e.g., when using the additional 3SBS in difficult situations), then start with encouraging participants that simply becoming aware of their posture is helpful.

Be precise in communicating the 3 steps of the practice during guidance.

N.B.

The 3SBS and other practices need to be accompanied by a teaching process that supports participants to practise at home and integrate the process into their everyday lives. This aspect of the teaching is rated in **Domain 5** (Conveying course themes through interactive inquiry and didactic teaching).

Examples of how this needs to be attended to in relation to the 3SBS are cited below:

- **Preparing participants to integrate this into their day** – encourage participants to anchor the practice to a specific activity in their day;

- It is useful to guide the practice and then afterwards to explain about the three parts, perhaps using the flip chart;

- **Encouraging participants to use the 3SBS as a natural first step** (e.g., whenever things feel difficult or there is confusion; using the 3SBS during class when strong emotions have been explored, or there is another need to re-ground in present moment experience, can be a good reminder of this);

- **Developing clarity regarding** the application of the 3SBS throughout the MBCT course (see Segal et al., 2013 for details).

DOMAIN 5:
CONVEYING COURSE THEMES THROUGH INTERACTIVE INQUIRY AND DIDACTIC TEACHING

This domain assesses the skill of conveying course themes interactively to participants.

At times, these are explicitly drawn out and underlined by the teacher and at other times these emerge implicitly. The domain includes inquiry, group dialogue, use of stories and poems, facilitating group exercises, orienting participants to session/course themes and didactic teaching.

Key features to be considered when assessing this domain:

1 **Experiential focus** – Supporting participants to notice and describe the different elements of direct experience and their interaction with each other; teaching themes are consistently linked to this direct experience.

2 **Inquiry process layers** - Moving around the layers within the inquiry process (direct experience, reflection on direct experience, and linking both to wider learning) with a predominant focus on process rather than content.

3 **Conveying themes** – The teacher conveys the learning themes through skilful teaching using a range of teaching approaches, including: inquiry; didactic teaching; experiential and group exercises; stories; poems, and action methods, etc.

4 **Fluency** – The teacher brings fluency, confidence and ease to the teaching process.

5 **Enabling learning** - The teaching is effective in enabling learning to happen.

Please note

i Although course themes are conveyed through all elements of the course, this domain only covers the teacher's skill during the inquiry process, didactic teaching and facilitation of group exercises (i.e., not during guiding mindfulness practices).

ii This domain assesses the skill with which the teacher conveys the teaching themes – the presence of the themes themselves is rated in Domain 1 (Coverage, pacing and organisation of session curriculum).

iii Embodying mindfulness is a crucial underpinning to interactive teaching and should be assessed under Domain 3 (Embodying mindfulness).

iv Inquiry relies on there being a skilful relational connection between the teacher and participant (Domain 2 - Relational Skills) and a skilful holding of the group (Domain 6 - Holding the group Learning Environment).

Incompetent

Teaching process unclear and inconsistent with principles of mindfulness-based teaching.

Examples include: teacher makes no attempt to elicit specific elements of direct experience; teacher not familiar with material; over reliance on didactic teaching, debate or persuasion; the inquiry process has the potential for causing harm.

Beginner

At least one of the four key features is present at a level that would be desirable for adequate MBI teaching, but there are significant levels of inconsistency across all key features.

Examples include: highly inconsistent attempts to elicit specific aspects of direct experience; teaching process predominantly in one layer (i.e., teacher harvests direct experience, but does not weave it into course teaching themes); teaching process conveys some teaching themes, but considerable inconsistency; teaching style dull, un-engaging and lacking fluidity; teaching approach does not generally bring the teaching to life for participants.

Advanced Beginner

At least two of the four key features are at a competent level, but difficulty and/or inconsistency is clearly evident in other key features; teaching process is adequate but basic. Participants' safety is not compromised; no aspects of the inquiry process are destructive to participants.

Examples include: teacher uses specific aspects of direct experience and integrates it with teaching themes, but there is a lack of fluidity and clarity in communicating themes; lack of familiarity with material; lack of relevancy of material to participants; teaching approaches convey some learning themes but at a basic level.

Competent

All key features present to a good level of skill with some minor inconsistencies.

Examples include: teaching process generally conveys key teaching themes in an understandable and accessible manner; teacher employs a range of teaching methods effectively to bring the learning themes to life; teacher reasonably fluid and familiar with material; there are some inconsistencies or gaps, e.g., teacher does not fully integrate direct experience of participants into the material.

Proficient

All key features consistently present.

Examples include: teacher deeply familiar with the material; participants' direct experience thoroughly integrated into the teaching; teaching is 'alive' and learning is obviously taking place; creative range of teaching approaches are used to highlight learning themes in a compelling way.

Advanced

All key features present to a high skill level.

Examples include: highly skilful and inspiring teaching skills; teacher precisely and sensitively draws out elements of experience; teacher works in an interactive and participatory way with the group to explore experience; range of key teaching themes conveyed in a highly accessible, engaging manner and connected with the personal direct experience of participants and the teacher when appropriate; teacher thoroughly 'at home' and familiar with the material from many angles; teaching feels 'alive' and highly engaging. Difficult for reviewer to find further 'learning needs' to feedback.

DOMAIN 6:

HOLDING THE GROUP LEARNING ENVIRONMENT
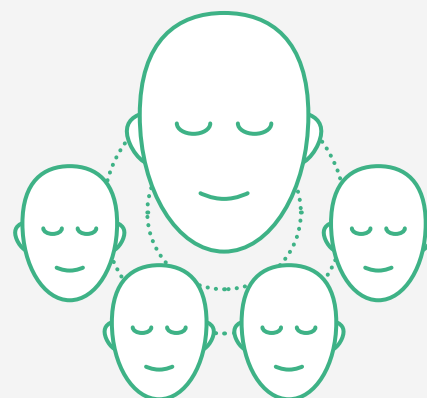
The whole teaching process takes place within the context of a group, which if facilitated effectively becomes a vehicle for connecting participants with the universality of the processes being explored, while also making space for the infinite variety of human beings taking the class.

The teacher creates a 'container,' or learning environment, that 'holds' the group and within which the teaching can effectively take place. The teacher works responsively with group process: through bringing an appropriate leadership style to the teaching; through taking good care of group safety, trust and boundary issues; through employing a teaching style that takes account of the individual within the context of the group, and balancing the needs of both; through using the group process to draw out universal learning themes; and through working with and responding to group development processes by managing the various

phases of group formation, development and ending. The teacher is able to 'tune into,' connect with, and respond appropriately to shifts and changes in group mood and characteristics. In addition, the teacher is tuned to the context of the times and the particular needs of the population, depending on where the MBI is offered. This likely includes trauma, as well as obvious or more hidden differences (nationality, class, education level, gender identity, national or regional social or political impacts, and more). For example, if the class is being offered for a work group, the teacher recognizes potential power issues that may make sharing vulnerable material more challenging and works to balance the need for privacy with opportunities to share more deeply appropriately. During challenging times of social unrest, political uncertainty, or economic turbulence, a teacher may need to both identify and acknowledge the current circumstances, while also holding a strong alignment to practice. This supports steadiness in participants' ability to practice in the most demanding of times.

Key features to be considered when assessing this domain:

1 **Learning container** – Creating and sustaining a rich learning environment made safe through careful management of issues such as ground rules, boundaries and confidentiality, but which is simultaneously a place in which participants can explore and take risks.

2 **Group development** – Clear management of the group development processes over the eight weeks, particularly regarding the management of the group in terms of beginnings, endings and challenges.

3 **Personal to universal learning** – The teacher consistently opens the learning process towards connection with the universality and common humanity of the processes under exploration.

4 **Leadership style** – The teacher offers sustained 'holding,' and demonstrates authority and potency without imposing the teacher's views on participants.

Incompetent

Group learning environment is managed ineffectively and unsafely.

Beginner

At least one of the four key features is present at a level that would be desirable for adequate MBI teaching, but there are significant levels of inconsistency across all key features.

Examples include: Teacher does not adequately attend to group boundaries and safety and lacks skill in managing group stages/process; leadership style ineffective or inappropriate; the movement from personal story to universal learning themes is absent.

Advanced Beginner

At least two of the four key features at a competent level but some difficulty and/or inconsistency clearly evident in others; participants' safety is not compromised; no aspect of the process is unsafe for participants.

Examples include: some inconsistency in managing aspects of group process; communication style during inquiry may be overly focused on the individual to the exclusion of awareness of group process; awareness of normal group development processes may not be clearly integrated into teaching; leadership style appropriate but perhaps lacking in 'potency;' inconsistent 'holding' of the group environment.

Competent

All key features present to a good level of skill with some minor inconsistencies.

Examples include: sensitivity and awareness of group process is generally integrated into the teaching; safety is handled appropriately; learning container is well managed by teacher, enabling participants to engage with the process; individual experience is held within the context of wider learning; leadership approach is clear and generally well held.

Proficient

All key features consistently present.

Examples include: teacher demonstrates well-developed skills working with and facilitating the group learning environment; teacher skilfully includes the group in the field of their awareness, is connected with the issues arising in the group and responds to them appropriately; moves fluidly and respectfully from personal story to universal themes; leadership style is engaging, confident and potent.

Advanced

All key features present to a high skill level.

Examples include: teacher demonstrates excellent group working skills as evidenced by a highly responsive and skilful way of working with group process while meeting the needs of individuals; highly engaging leadership style. Difficult for reviewer to find further 'learning needs' to feedback.

ASSESSING MINDFULNESS-BASED TEACHING COMPETENCE

Teacher: _____

Date of session: _____   Session number: _____

Assessor: _____

Date of Assessment: _____

Video recording ◯   Live Observation ◯

MINDFULNESS-BASED INTERVENTIONS:
TEACHING ASSESSMENT CRITERIA – SUMMARY SHEET

Compentence scale

1. Incompetent **2.** Beginner **3.** Advanced Beginner **4.** Competent **5.** Proficient **6.** Advanced

Domain	Key features (use the following page to offer qualitative feedback)	Competence 1-6 Fill according to scale
1. Coverage, pacing and organisation of session curriculum	Adherence to curriculum	
	Responsiveness and flexibility in adhering	
	Appropriateness of themes and content	
	Organisation of teacher, room and materials	
	Session flow and pacing	
2. Relational skills	Authenticity and potency	
	Connection and acceptance	
	Compassion and warmth	
	Curiosity and respect	
	Mutuality	
3. Embodying mindfulness	Present moment focus	
	Present moment responsiveness	
	Steadiness and alertness	
	Attitudinal foundations	
	Person of the teacher	
4. Guiding mindfulness practices	Language – precise and spacious	
	Key learning for each practice available	
	Elements to consider when guiding	
5. Conveying course themes through interactive inquiry and didactic teaching	Experiential focus	
	Layers within the inquiry process	
	Teaching skills/ conveying learning	
	Fluency	
	Effectiveness of teaching	
6. Holding the group learning environment	Learning container	
	Group development	
	Common humanity	
	Leadership style	

MINDFULNESS-BASED INTERVENTIONS:
TEACHING ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
– COMMENTARY SHEET

Domain	Teaching strengths	Learning needs
1. Coverage, pacing and organisation of session curriculum		
2. Relational skills		
3. Embodying mindfulness		
4. Guiding mindfulness practices		
5. Conveying course themes through interactive inquiry and didactic teaching		
6. Holding the group learning environment		

MINDFULNESS-BASED INTERVENTIONS: TEACHING ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

(MBI:TAC)

Summary version

First version: 2010
Second version: 2018
Third version: 2021