

The Universities of Bangor, Exeter and Oxford

**Mindfulness-based Interventions
Teaching Assessment Criteria**

(MBI:TAC)

Summary of the 6 domains

(NB this is an extract from the full document which can be accessed on the
MBI:TAC website – mbitac.bangor.ac.uk)

The six domains of competence within the MBI:TAC

Domain 1: Coverage, pacing and organisation of session curriculum (page 4)

Domain 2: Relational skills (page 6)

Domain 3: Embodiment of mindfulness (page 8)

Domain 4: Guiding mindfulness practices (page 10)

Domain 5: Conveying course themes through interactive inquiry and didactic teaching (page 12)

Domain 6: Holding the group learning environment (page 14)

Domain 1: Coverage, pacing and organisation of session curriculum

Overview: 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 well-paced with a sense of spaciousness, steadiness and lack of time pressure. Digressions are steered back into the session curriculum with tact and ease.

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

1. *Adherence to the form of the programme and coverage of themes and curriculum content*
2. *Responsiveness and flexibility in adhering to the session curriculum*
3. *Appropriateness of the themes and content (taking into account the stage of the programme and experience of the participants)*
4. *Level of organisation of the teacher, room and materials*
5. *The degree to which the session flows and is appropriately paced*

Domain 2: Relational skills

Overview: 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).

Five key features need to be considered in 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 his/her experience while respecting each participants' vulnerabilities, boundaries and need for privacy
5. *Mutuality* – engaging with the participants in a mutual and collaborative working relationship

Domain 3: Embodiment of mindfulness

Overview: The teacher inhabits the practice of mindfulness. This is particularly conveyed through the teacher's body in terms of his/her physical and non-verbal expression. Embodiment of 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 (Kabat-Zinn, 1990).

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

1. *Present moment focus - expressed through behaviour and non-verbal communication*
2. *Present moment responsiveness - working with the emergent moment*
3. *Calmness and vitality - simultaneously conveying steadiness, ease, non-reactivity and alertness*
4. *Allowing – the teacher's behaviour is non-judging, patient, trusting, accepting and non-striving*
5. *Natural presence of the teacher – the teacher behaviour is authentic to their own intrinsic mode of operating*

Domain 4: Guiding mindfulness practices

Overview: 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, his/her guidance suggests the attitudes to bring to oneself and one's experience throughout the practice. The practices offer balanced spaciousness with precision. Skilful use of language is key to conveying all this.

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

- 1. Language is clear, precise, accurate and accessible while conveying spaciousness.*
- 2. 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. The particular elements to consider when guiding each practice are appropriately present (see checklists for each practice in the manual). These include practical issues, and safety and trauma considerations.*

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

Overview: This domain assesses the skill of conveying course themes interactively to participants. These are at times explicitly drawn out and underlined by the teacher and at other times 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. A large part of each session is taken up by interactive teaching processes – reviewing/inquiring into the experience of mindfulness practices during the session and at home, drawing out experience during and after group exercises, and offering didactic teaching in an interactive and participatory manner. This exploratory way of approaching experience illuminates the habitual tendencies and patterns of the human mind and offers a training in a way of investigating and working with experience beyond the programme. Participants' difficulties (e.g., avoidance, distress, emotional reactivity) in sessions are crucial opportunities to convey course themes, and the way the teacher works in these moments should be given weight in assessing overall, and in this domain in particular.

Four key features need to be considered in 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. 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 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, confidence, and ease.*
- 5. The teaching is effective in enabling learning to happen.*

Domain 6: Holding the group learning environment

Overview: 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. 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 balances the needs of both; through using the group process to draw out universal learning themes; 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.

Four key features need to be considered in 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 – offers sustained 'holding,' demonstrates authority and potency without imposing the teacher's views on participants.*

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. Embodiment of mindfulness		
4. Guiding mindfulness practices		
5. Conveying course themes through interactive inquiry and didactic teaching		
6. Holding the group learning environment		