



The Universities of Bangor, Exeter and Oxford

Mindfulness-based Interventions Teaching Assessment Criteria

(MBI:TAC)

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¹ For convenience these are amalgamated into one document here, but are also available separately.

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Manual of the

**Mindfulness-based Interventions
Teaching Assessment Criteria**

(MBI:TAC)

This manual version should be used in conjunction with the MBI:TAC summary to assess the competence and adherence of mindfulness-based programme teaching.

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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 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.

What is intervention integrity?

Intervention integrity is the term used to describe the degree to which an intervention is implemented as intended. Broadly, the concept has three dimensions: adherence, differentiation, and competence:

1. 'Adherence' refers to the extent to which the teacher/therapist both applies the appropriate 'ingredients' at the appropriate time points, while also refraining from introducing methods and curriculum elements that are not recognised as part of the approach.
2. 'Differentiation' refers to the degree to which the approach can be distinguished from other approaches.
3. 'Competence' is a more complex dimension, and refers to the teacher's skill in delivering the intervention.

Why is it important to look carefully at mindfulness-based teaching integrity? Verification of the integrity of an approach is important for a number of reasons:

1. In research trials, delivering the teaching (as intended and to a sufficiently high quality) is a key variable in interpreting the results, and may well influence outcome for participants. In order to be sure of this, research trial governance needs to include systems to assess levels of adherence, differentiation and competence.
2. These issues are not confined to research trial contexts. In training contexts, clarity is needed regarding the particular skills that are developed, and systems should be in place to ensure that the training achieves its aims.
3. In the context of university-validated postgraduate teacher training programs (such as those offered at the UK universities of Bangor, Oxford and Exeter), formal assessment of teaching practice is required for the award of academic credits. For this purpose, assessment criteria and the assessment process must be entirely clear and transparent.
4. Systems to check teaching integrity are also an important ingredient in successful intervention implementation. MBIs are increasingly commissioned and implemented in the UK National Health Service and other settings. In the drive to implement a promising approach, however, there is a risk that the very factors that give rise to its promise are lost through a dilution of its integrity as it is rolled out. Nationally agreed benchmarks and governance assessing readiness to teach can help ensure that slippage from the core model does not take place during the transition from research to practice (Crane & Kuyken, 2012).

The field of MBIs is developing at a fast pace. Training programmes need to respond to good practice issues to build integrity into these developments. The authors were all involved in the three Master's programmes offering mindfulness-based teacher training in the UK (Bangor, Exeter and Oxford

Universities). These programmes include assessment of teaching competence within their trainings. It was clear that a robust methodology was required to enable consistency and reliability both within the training team and nationally, and to establish a level of expected competence that represents readiness to practice in the UK context.

When making assessments of competence prior to the development of the criteria, our experience was that we had a surprising degree of consistency of judgement within core teams. However, a number of challenges existed. In particular, the criteria on which assessments were made were not clearly stated, leading to a lack of transparency to trainees and making the basis on which final grades were decided difficult to defend. A more in-depth description of the development of the MBI:TAC can be found in the research paper (Crane et al., 2013) and in *Mindfulness and the Transformation of Despair* (Williams et al., 2015).

Discriminations about competence will always have an element of subjectivity to them. Our intention is to create a system that both supports the process of forming these judgments and also brings some consistency and transparency to the process. As we mentioned before, slippage from the core model can occur during the transition from the early vision of an approach (or from research on it) to its mainstream application. This can dilute the model's potency. A key part of our intention is to provide the discipline of a structure, which offers a reminder of what is considered core to skilful mindfulness-based teaching.

Research on the MBI:TAC

The MBI:TAC is the first tool that has been developed to assess mindfulness-based teaching integrity. Preliminary findings on its psychometric properties are encouraging (for a detailed report, see Crane et al., 2013). The reliability of the tool was evaluated during routine assessment practice in the three Master's programs at Bangor, Exeter and Oxford Universities where a proportion of students' teaching practice was independently assessed by two trainers. The overall intra-class correlation coefficient (ICC), which measures inter-rater reliability, indicated a good level of agreement ($r = .81, p < .01$). Even when assessors disagreed on one domain, the reliability of averaged ratings was excellent. Equally, the evaluations of validity that were possible at this early stage in the tool's development were encouraging. Further research in a range of contexts is needed, however, to clarify the MBI:TAC's reliability and validity. Research is also needed: on the relationship between teaching integrity and participant outcome; on the relationship between competence and outcome; and on the effectiveness of methods used in training programs to develop core skills.

The remarkable expansion of research on mindfulness over the last 15 years has predominantly focused on evaluating the outcome of mindfulness-based courses. There has been little research though, on the teaching/learning process through which these outcomes are achieved. Given that these processes are multi-dimensional, complex and subtle, this is perhaps not surprising. However, developing greater understanding of how positive outcomes are brought about would be of great value in guiding future developments.

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 (page 15)
- Domain 2: Relational skills (page 19)
- Domain 3: Embodiment of mindfulness (page 23)
- Domain 4: Guiding mindfulness practices (page 29)
- Domain 5: Conveying course themes through interactive inquiry and didactic teaching (page 37)
- Domain 6: Holding the group learning environment (page 43)

Each domain comprises a number of ‘key features’ that describe its main aspects. These important features must be considered when scoring each domain. When assessing each domain, first identify whether the key features are present; then consider the competence level of the teaching. If the teacher includes most of the key features and uses them appropriately (i.e. misses few relevant opportunities to use them), the teacher should be assessed highly. The tables of ‘Examples’ in the MBI:TAC summary within each domain give some guidance on what teaching *looks like* at each of the competence levels within each domain. These should be regarded as guidance rather than comprehensive exemplars.

This manual offers more detailed narrative guidance on each key feature within each domain, and is intended to accompany the use of the Summary MBI:TAC.

Some of what we don’t know about mindfulness-based teacher competence

In developing the domains, it was clear that all the competences represented by each domain are absolutely crucial to the overall process. If any were not present, the teaching would have significant flaws and gaps. Also, each domain represents a distinct aspect of the teaching process. Some domains are, of course, more substantial/multi-faceted and have more key features describing them. However, it is less clear whether certain domains are more important than others. At this stage in the development of our understanding about teaching processes, it is not known which particular competences best predict participant outcome. The decision was consequently made to give each domain equal priority in the profile and summary score.

It is possible for two teachers to be both adherent and competent while also being quite different in style and emphasis. Given that it is not yet clear how particular emphases within the teaching process or styles of teaching relate to outcomes for participants, the criteria do allow some variation. It is important, therefore, that assessors bring an open mind to the process of viewing and judging the teaching of others, and to recognise and set aside personal bias and preference. We set out a proposed way of rating teaching practice (below) that supports assessors to use both intuitive and evidentially-based reasoning to form judgments about a piece of teaching.

Some limitations of the competence criteria

It is important to remember that these assessment criteria are a tool that can support consistent assessment of teacher competence. However, given that the assessor does not have access to the entire picture, the MBI:TAC does not offer a complete picture of the teacher's capacity and competence. The assessor can only base assessments on *observations* of the teacher and her/his behaviours. It is, therefore, helpful to use the criteria in conjunction with other assessment methodologies such as reflective assignments in which the teacher tracks his/her awareness of inner process, and theoretical assignments that ask the teacher to demonstrate understanding of underpinning principles.

Notably, there are some key areas that cannot be assessed via direct observation of teaching – that of good practice that happens around the teaching. A prior requisite of the assessment process involves ensuring that a basis of good practice for mindfulness-based teaching is in place. Guidance for good practice has been drawn up and agreed by the UK Network for Mindfulness-based Teacher Training Organisations' (see mindfulnessteachersuk.org.uk, 2015).

Another challenge that can arise when discerning and labelling the component parts of a complex process, is a sense of rigidity can be introduced, despite the fact that a significant component part is evidence of flexibility, responsiveness and sensitivity of the teacher to present moment experience. To guard against an overly rigid interpretation, we encourage the assessor to shift attention regularly from close-up observation of detail to a more wide-angle perspective to get a better sense of the process. We also encourage a fine-tuned awareness of personal reactivity and preference etc., which might bias an assessment in a certain direction. In the early stages of using the MBI:TAC to assess others, it is helpful for an assessor to work with an experienced user of the criteria to support recognition of personal bias. In the universities where the MBI:TAC is used to grade students for academic awards, an internal moderator and an external assessor act as a check in the system to ensure the criteria are being applied accurately and fairly.

For newer teachers, the experience of having competence assessed can have the effect of bringing attention to the component parts of the teaching in ways that encourage 'thinking about' rather than 'being with' the process. There is some inevitability to this natural way of learning about and integrating new skills. As new learning is assimilated, the process seems initially like a bag of techniques and methods, which then gradually become integrated into the person as a natural way of being. It can help teachers to watch recordings of their own teaching. They can use this time as an opportunity to reflect on the elements that make up the whole, and then while teaching to prioritise attending to the immediacy of the moment.

It is important to bear in mind that when teaching is assessed at the higher end of the competence criteria, this is taken to mean that the teacher has the capacity to teach at this level – even though there will be inevitable variations in competence. Conversely, when teaching is assessed at the lower end, this is taken to mean that at the moment of assessment competence was not demonstrated. To take into account this variability, the training courses represented by the authors require submission of a recording of the teaching of a whole eight-session course to enable sampling of the teacher's breadth of practice.

Principles to bear in mind when using the assessment criteria

While assessing competence using these criteria, assessors should keep a number of principles in mind:

- The scaling assumes that competences develop over time, and that greater competence develops with training, practice and feedback.
- Assessors should agree beforehand (i) which domains are being assessed and (ii) what is the unit of assessment (e.g. leading a particular practice and inquiry; a curriculum element within the eight-week course; a whole session; or the entire eight-week course). Not all domains of competence, or key features within domains, would be expected to be observable if the unit of assessment is a component of the eight-week course.
- *Observable data* should be used as evidence to make assessments. If there are contextual reasons that have compromised the demonstration of competence, the assessor must be informed so that these reasons can be taken into account while assessing, if appropriate to do so (e.g. the session was co-taught by two teachers, or a participant asked that their contributions to the session be edited out of the video recording, or the group had some particularly vulnerable members which influenced teacher choices).
- If certain behaviours are expected, but are absent, then this can be used to assess the domain.
Again, a narrative note can indicate what was expected but missing. There may be contextual reasons for the absence, so it is important that the assessor does not rush to judgement.
- Competence in one domain does not necessarily imply competence in another domain.
- The descriptors of competency within a domain are progressive, i.e. higher-level skills include skills already described in previous bandings.
- The domains are not ranked in any order of importance but some are more substantial than others, i.e. there are a greater number of features to take into account.
- Likewise, key features are given equal weighting, i.e. none are presumed to be more important than others.
- The domains describe processes that are at play throughout the teaching. At any one moment, several domains will be in action. For example, during the teacher-led dialogue that follows a mindfulness practice, Domain 1 will be relevant (appropriateness of the contents of the themes that are being drawn out, pacing of the session); Domain 2 will be relevant (the relational aspect of the conversations); Domain 3 will be relevant (the embodiment of mindfulness during the inquiry process); Domain 5 will be relevant (the quality of the teaching process inherent within the dialogue); and Domain 6 will be relevant (the quality of awareness and responsiveness to the group process during the dialogue).
- The skills and processes represented by the domains are all highly interconnected, making it challenging to discriminate what aspect of the teaching to assess within each domain. As far as possible, it is important that the assessor fully knows in which domains the various elements of the teaching process they are assessing. The assessor should refer to the key features when making these discriminations. Additional guidance for discriminating is given as 'N.B.s' under the features within each domain. Confusion in this area can lead to a highly experienced mindfulness-based teacher making unreliable assessments. Experience is needed also in aligning to the form of this tool.
- Regarding co-teaching, if assessment of a teacher is taking place while they are working with a co-teacher, the quality of this relationship is folded into Domain 2. See guidance on this on page 21.

Embodiment

Mindfulness is an internal process, a particular way of relating to one's experience. To communicate this successfully to participants, teachers need to embody this process themselves. The term 'embodiment' essentially describes how this interior work of mindfulness practice is implicitly reflected in the teacher's presence and behaviour, which in turn influences the atmosphere of the classroom. In other words, embodiment reflects the extent to which teachers are mindfully connected with their experience and the interface between this, the group, individual participants and the teaching process.

In the preliminary research on the MBI:TAC, the embodiment domain was the one with the least agreement between assessors (see results and discussion sections of Crane et al., 2013). While developing the criteria, it was the embodiment domain that we found most challenging to capture through specific descriptors. We needed to find ways to describe what it 'looks, sounds, and feels like' when teachers do the inner work of connecting mindfully to experience and how this inner work is reflected in their verbal and non-verbal behaviour. This domain is perhaps the most sensitive to assess because it reflects the 'personhood,' natural presence and authenticity of the teacher. We therefore encourage assessors to be particularly sensitive in approaching this domain. There is no single way to look embodied, which makes it difficult to reach accuracy with descriptors. However, the descriptors aim to point towards the qualities that will be visible when this particular internal process is happening.

Levels of competence

The Dreyfus Scale of Competence (Dreyfus, 1986) underpins the competence descriptions (see Table 1). There were five levels in the original Dreyfus scale, but the following changes were made: the additional level of 'incompetence' has been added; the term 'novice' is replaced by 'beginner;' and the term 'expert' is replaced by 'advanced' as outlined below, with an equivalent numerical band to the right of the table. The assessment criteria also draw on work evaluating the competence of psychological practitioners by Sharpless & Barber (2009).

The levels within the assessment criteria represent the range of teaching competence that is realistically expected in mindfulness-based teaching. Each level represents a developmental stage. It is natural for teachers to move through the stages over time as skills and understanding develop, and if the appropriate training and good practice processes such as supervision are in place. 'Beginner' and 'advanced beginner' are appropriate levels for teachers in the early stages of training; 'competent' is an appropriate level for a student teacher graduating from a full teacher training programme/supervised pathway with some early teaching experience in the field; 'proficient' is an appropriate level for a teacher who has taught a significant number of classes and is now deeply familiar with and at home within the teaching process; and the 'advanced' level is likely to be a teacher with considerable depth and length of experience and with a maturity in their teaching practice. In practice, though, any one teacher is unlikely to demonstrate consistent levels of competence and some variability between adjacent levels is normal.

Making a determination regarding which level the teaching falls into within each domain is the most challenging aspect of this process, and requires practice in using the assessment criteria and comparing results against benchmarked assessments (see section on training below). The tables of examples given in the MBI:TAC Summary document for each domain are intended to support these discriminations. Within a university Master's programme setting, each competence level is further divided into high, middle and low.

Becoming reliable in using the criteria (i.e. applying them in ways that are consistent with benchmarked criteria) takes time and practice. It requires an awareness of personal patterns and tendencies. In a workshop on the MBI:TAC, for example, several participants noticed that their tendency towards giving low ratings mirrored the ways in which they tended to review their own teaching process!

Levels of Competence and Adherence in MBI:TAC
(adapted from the Dreyfus Scale of Competence, 1986)

Competence band	Generic definition of overall competence level	Numerical band
Incompetent <i>The teaching demonstrates an absence of key features, highly inappropriate performance, or behaviour that is harmful.</i>	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 <i>The teaching demonstrates basic building blocks of MBI competence in at least one feature.</i>	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 <i>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.</i>	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 <i>Teaching is competent, with some problems and/or inconsistencies</i>	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 <i>Sustained competence demonstrated with few or minor problems and/or inconsistencies.</i>	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 <i>Excellent teaching practice, or very good even in the face of participant difficulties</i>	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. S/he has deep tacit understanding of the issues and is 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

How to use the MBI:TAC to make assessments of competence

The criteria extend over six bands from 'incompetent,' where the teacher did not adhere to that aspect of the programme nor demonstrate competence, to 'advanced' where there is adherence and very high skill. Thus the MBI:TAC assesses both adherence to programme method and the skill of the teacher. Using the summary sheet (see end of document), mark with an 'X' in the appropriate column/row, the level to which you think the teacher has fulfilled the core function in each of the domains being assessed.

It is recommended that the following process is used while making competence assessments when watching video recordings (it is not recommended to use the MBI:TAC from audio recordings, since they give too little information for effective assessment):

1. Watch the entirety of the piece of teaching that is being assessed. Bring mindful attention to your experience while engaging in 'experiencing the teaching' by placing yourself in the position of participant, including participating in mindfulness practices.
2. During this first viewing, have the scoring sheet near to hand to remind you of the domains and key features. If it is helpful, make notes under relevant sections to make a record of the demonstration of key features at various levels of competence. In this way, a profile will build up that is anchored to the key features within each domain. Keep engaging and connecting with the teaching on a participatory experiential level. Put more emphasis on what is present in the teaching experience than on what might be perceived as absent. Put more emphasis also on participating in the teaching than on assessing it.
3. At the end of the teaching, take a mindful pause, settling into your direct experience. From this place, make a global assessment of the teacher's competence level using the table on the previous page as a guide.
4. Now take time to consider each individual domain and the key features within it, discerning how the teacher's skills were demonstrated within these. Take the time to ensure all the teaching that was evidenced is taken into account when making your rating, and make an assessment accordingly. This stage involves the development of 'hypotheses' that can be tested against further evidence of the teaching practice on the recording (e.g. a hypothesis might develop that 'this teacher has a tendency to move quickly over exploring immediacy of experience into making a teaching point.') If this has been seen just once, the assessor would need to look at other examples of the teacher during inquiry to see if it is a pattern or a one off before using it as a basis to make an assessment.
5. Place an X in the appropriate level. Written feedback (under the headings 'Teaching strengths' and 'Learning needs') can be given on the following sheet where evidence of strengths and emerging strengths are noted, and what is required to advance further is indicated. Aim for the length of text within each side to be similar to guard against the tendency to say more about development needs than strengths.
6. Finally, step back from the detail and review the overall profile of competence across the domains, considering how these relate to your initial global assessment. If there is a discrepancy between the detailed assessments and the first global assessment, pause and reflect. Both have value in informing competence levels. Return to the

teaching recording to gather direct evidence that challenges or supports your global or detailed assessments before arriving at a final decision. At this point, it can be very helpful to collaborate with a colleague to make the assessments.

The assessments yield a multi-dimensional profile of scores (i.e. assessments may well vary across different domains, particularly earlier in a teacher's development). When using the assessment criteria to support teacher development (e.g. as part of a supervision process), this profile will offer what is needed. For the purpose of a summative assessment (e.g. to assess a teacher's readiness to teach in a research trial or pass an assessed module), the profile can be summed into an overall score. In such contexts, it may be reasonable to expect that all domains be assessed at least at the advanced beginner or the competent level depending on the nature/level of the assessment context. Local versions of the summary assessment sheet can be developed that integrate appropriate marking grades for academic contexts and allow for an overall average score to be realised.

Where inconsistency of competence is demonstrated within a domain (e.g. proficient level might be demonstrated during guiding a practice in early part of session, whilst beginner level might be demonstrated at end of session), take the average of these for the overall score and include a narrative note explaining this.

Using the assessment criteria in the presence of challenges and difficulties

For all domains, focus on the skill of the teacher while taking into account challenges and difficulties that arise in the session. In instances where the group or individuals are presenting unusually challenging difficulties, the assessor needs to assess the teacher's skills in applying the methods within the context of the difficulties. A central theme of MBIs is learning to be with and to work with difficulty. Credit should be given, therefore, for demonstrations of appropriate skilful interventions and interactions when working with challenge and difficulty.

Training to use the MBI:TAC

One cannot expose oneself to the rigour of being assessed for competence without experiencing some vulnerability, so this work requires deep sensitivity and respect from all involved. In all contexts, nurturing the development of trainees and established teachers is the core issue of concern. We strongly hope that assessments are carried out not only with sensitive awareness of the process, but are also with skilfully framed qualitative feedback and supportive developmental guidance. The criteria were developed with an awareness of both the potential and the risks of applying such methods to the assessment of something as complex and multidimensional as teaching MBIs. It is important that users of the criteria also bring these understandings to the process.

Assessors should themselves be assessed at the level of 'proficient' or 'advanced' on the MBI:TAC prior to using the criteria to assess others. However, because many teachers are now using the criteria in an informal way to support reflective practice, this can take place at any developmental stage.

Before using the tool to assess others, it is critically important that that users receive training in the use of these assessment criteria. It takes time to become familiar with the contents,

structure and process of the MBI:TAC, to reach a benchmark understanding of what the domains mean, and to discern the competence level of the teaching. The reliability of assessments increases as the assessor becomes familiar and more experienced with the criteria and with the process of using it to assess competence. It has been found to be very helpful for new users to co-assess with more experienced assessors, discussing the process and reaching a consensus. It is also clear that the assessor must be deeply familiar (from the perspective of being a teacher) with the particular mindfulness-based programme that they are assessing.

Training pathway to learn to use the MBI:TAC

1. Familiarisation with the MBI:TAC

- *Learning to use the MBI:TAC as a personal, reflective support during teacher training. This might include dialogue with mindfulness supervisor/trainer to explore learning needs and teaching strengths.*
- Fulfilling GPG for MBI teachers (mindfulnessteachersuk.org.uk)

2. Assessment of own teaching with the MBI:TAC

- *Using the MBI:TAC to receive feedback/be assessed on your teaching.*
- Developmental and then summative assessment of own teaching with the MBI:TAC by peers/supervisor/trainer

2a. Developing personal teaching practice

- *To progress to the next level assumes progression from being a competent MBI teacher to proficient/advanced, and/or becoming a mindfulness supervisor, and/or becoming a teacher trainer. Using the MBI:TAC to assess others' teaching needs to be in areas of work where the assessor is proficient him/herself, and normally the assessor has knowledge and experience of the population and context.*
- Take a 2-day MBI:TAC training workshop during this stage

3. Assessing others with the MBI:TAC

- *Learning to reliably use the tool to assess mindfulness-based teaching competence and adherence.*
- Take training with MBI:TAC developers to build skills in accurately applying domain/level descriptors
- Benchmark assessments against centralised assessments on teaching practice until reliability is achieved
- Take supervision with an experienced MBI:TAC assessor

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 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.

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*

N.B.

- 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.

Detailed explanation of the five key features of Domain 1

Key feature 1: Adherence to the form of the programme and coverage of themes and curriculum content

This feature assesses the presence or absence of appropriate curriculum content and themes, as well as the adherence to the overall form of the programme/session. There are some curriculum elements to each session that are ‘non-negotiable’ and need always to be in place:

- at least 30 minutes of mindfulness practice; each session other than session 1 begins with practice;
- practice and home practice review/inquiry; discussion of home practice for forthcoming week;
- final mindfulness practice/mindful pause to close session, or some approach that ensures sessions end with a mindful awareness of ending and transition;
- the session themes need to be conveyed both through the process and content of the teaching session.

The intention and aims of curriculum elements that the teacher uses within the session need to be clearly aligned with the kind of course (e.g. MBSR or MBCT), with the client/participant group, with the context for the teaching and with the overarching programme intentions of the session. The assessor requires contextual information and rationales for curriculum content that departs from the usual MBSR or MBCT curriculum form.

Curriculum guides for MBSR and MBCT courses are available elsewhere and are not reproduced here (see Blacker et al., 2015, and Segal et al., 2012 in the reference list). The principles to bear in mind here are that MBSR for mixed populations usually aims to highlight general patterns that create human suffering, while MBCT (and MBSR which has been tailored for a particular population) also aims to highlight patterns that perpetuate specific vulnerabilities (such as vulnerability to depression recurrence).

Questions to ask when assessing this feature: did the teacher adhere to the expected curriculum for the session? Was the content of the dialogue appropriate to the stage of the course? Were curriculum elements introduced that do not belong to the usual MBSR/MBCT form?

Key feature 2: Responsiveness and flexibility in adhering to session curriculum

During mindfulness-based teaching, time must be given to exploring important issues with sensitivity, and also used simultaneously in an intentional and focused way. Effective coverage and pacing of the session curriculum offers an opportunity for a teacher to embody the possibility of balancing working responsively with the present moment, while holding an awareness of overarching intention. Skilful teaching, therefore, requires a dynamic balance between staying with the core intention for the session and responding to the spontaneity of the moment. Generally, the teacher will have a session plan to work to with approximate times allotted to each part of the session curriculum. A key skill is to hold this plan flexibly and lightly, and to enable appropriate responsiveness to the moment. This is particularly

emphasised in teaching MBSR, where content is transferable both between and within sessions. The main requirement is that the session themes are conveyed. A teacher may appropriately decide to drop a particular planned exercise should the material be naturally arising through other aspects.

It is important that the teacher conveys a strong sense of intention so that it is clear to the participants that the choice of focus for the time together has been carefully planned. Within this, it is important to honour the contributions of participants. For example, at times it can be fruitful to use seemingly unproductive digressions to build cohesion in the group and to weave them in as examples of the kinds of mind patterns highlighted by mindfulness-based teaching processes (e.g. recognising rumination in action; seeing the pressure to have rationales for what we do and to search for outcomes).

Key feature 3: Appropriateness of the themes and content (to stage of programme and to the participants)

This feature assesses the teacher's ability both to adhere to the themes as laid out in the standard programme form, *and* to recognise participants' needs so that the session can be adapted accordingly. It is important to bear in mind the building blocks that are needed to enable participants to apply new mindfulness skills in the face of difficulty. For example, it may be inappropriate at an early stage in the programme to encourage participants to deliberately 'turn towards' difficult experience.

Questions to ask when assessing this feature: is the teacher staying close/or straying away from the core themes and content that this session is intended to highlight?

Key feature 4: Level of organisation of teacher, room and materials

Questions to ask when assessing this feature: what was the level of organisation of the teacher, the room and the materials; has the teacher pre-arranged the room with the required number of chairs; have all the required materials for the particular session such as CDs and handouts been prepared; and are appropriate teaching aids available and used?

N.B. The skill with which teaching aids are used is assessed in **Domain 5** (Conveying course themes through interactive inquiry and didactic teaching).

Key feature 5: The degree to which the session flows and is appropriately paced

Questions to ask when assessing this feature: was there any time during the session when the session moved too slowly or quickly; did the session flow well overall; did the teacher appear rushed or unhelpfully slow; and did the teacher give the participants sufficient space and time to sense, feel and think?

The teacher may unwittingly belabour a point after the participant has already grasped the message, or may spend time gathering much more direct 'noticing' than is necessary. In these cases, the sessions can seem painfully slow and inefficient. On the other hand, the teacher may intervene before having gathered enough direct 'noticing' to draw out the learning themes. In summary, if the session is conducted too slowly or too quickly, the learning process

may be impeded and this could de-motivate the participant. The pacing of the material should always be tailored to the participant's needs and speed of learning. For example, when there is evidence of difficulties (e.g. emotional or cognitive difficulties), more time and attention may need to be given. In such circumstances, the agenda items may be shuffled or adapted accordingly. In some extreme circumstances (e.g. participant expressing distress), the structure and pacing of the session will need to be changed drastically in accordance with the needs of the situation.

Was the teacher able to work skilfully with digressions? The teacher may appropriately and politely interrupt peripheral discussion and then direct participants back to the agenda. The session should move through discrete phases that are clearly connected. It is important that the teacher maintains an overview of the session to allow correct pacing throughout without seeming preoccupied with 'time pressure.'

Was the pacing of the session adapted well to the needs of the participants? Was there sufficient time allocated to each element of the session (e.g. was there sufficient time left for the home practice assignment?). A well-paced session should address the intentions of the session without needing to exceed the time allocated.

The teacher may be observed using phrases similar to the following to build effective pacing into the session...

- We may have strayed off our focus a little, 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 and will be addressed in.....
- Do you mind stopping a moment, you've given me lots of information already. Just to make sure I have understood completely, let's look together at what you are describing here.
- Please summarise your experience in a few words or a short sentence.

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*

N.B.

- i. The relational aspect to mindfulness teaching is particularly related to **Domain 3** (Embodiment of 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.

Detailed explanation of the five key features of Domain 2

Key feature 1: Authenticity and potency – relating in a way that seems genuine, honest and confident

The teacher is honest and open in their relationships with participants. They relate in a way that is naturally aligned with how they are as a person. Facial expressions are congruent with the felt emotions and verbal expression in the room.

Instead of being caught into habitual, automatic reactions, the teacher's words are conscious responses based firmly on an awareness of what is internally perceived and sensed, so conveying authenticity and congruence to participants.

There is a sense of ease, naturalness and presence (i.e. how the teacher presents within the teaching feels like the person they are). There is a sense of honesty about who they are, so there isn't much to 'figure out' about them as a person.

N.B. This overlaps with embodiment. This key feature pertains to how authenticity is expressed in the moments of relating to participants.

Key feature 2: Connection and acceptance – actively attending to, attuning to and connecting with participants and their present moment experience, and conveying back an accurate and empathic understanding of this

This feature refers to the ability of the teacher to 'tune' into or empathise with what the participant is conveying. This skill relates to how well the teacher can step into the participant's world, see and experience life the way the participant does, and convey this understanding back to the participant. Active listening skills are essential to empathic listening and responding, and will include the appropriate use of open questions. Empathy is conveyed by the teacher's ability to make the participant aware that their difficulties are recognised and understood. The teacher accurately paraphrases both the *content* of what participants express and the *emotional tone*. The teacher demonstrates genuine interest in the participant's 'internal reality' and communicates (through appropriate verbal and non-verbal responses) enough understanding to help the participant feel understood. The teacher is completely willing to 'meet' each individual where s/he is in this moment, to respond in an attuned way to this and to explore and honour his/her experience just as it is. There is a clear movement from connecting with the individual, to attending to a participant's experience, and being responsive to it.

During conversations with participants in the class, the teacher will check in with them to gauge the accuracy of their understanding (e.g. 'So let me check that I am hearing you correctly...'; and 'So you noticed...') The teacher will demonstrate attentive body language (e.g. eye contact, encouraging gestures, positive facial expressions and nodding, etc.).

The respect inherent within this feature includes working sensitively with cultural diversity and respecting difference.

Key feature 3: Compassion and warmth – conveying a deep awareness, sensitivity, appreciation and openness to participants’ experience

The teacher displays an authentically warm and friendly affect, listens with full attention, thanks participants for their contributions and is encouraging and supportive.

Whereas empathy is the sense of ‘feeling with’ another being, compassion is the movement of mind that seeks to ‘feel with’ suffering. In the moment of relational contact, there is a sense that this individual who is here with me really matters. For compassion to be authentic, it must recognise and appreciate individual sovereignty. Unlike sympathy or pity, it boosts the other’s self-esteem and cultivates human dignity. There is, consequently, the recognition of the *human-ness* of experience, of knowing that in another moment it could be my turn to be ‘in the fire’ of painful experience. Compassion is thus accompanied by humility and recognition of interconnectedness (i.e. my ability to be compassionate and giving does not make me better than the recipient). Compassion strengthens our ability to remain human and be open to the experiences of others. Compassion particularly finds expression when painful experience is present. Warmth is an aspect of compassion, for a warm person conveys to others a sense of feeling appreciated, respected and accepted.

Key feature 4: Curiosity and respect – conveying genuine interest in each participant and his/her experience, while respecting each participants’ vulnerabilities, boundaries and need for privacy

The relational style of the teacher engages participants in an active exploration of their own experience rather than relying on the expertise of the teacher. In addition, the teacher brings a gentle but alive curiosity to the explorations that unfold in the session. The teacher has a strong degree of responsibility not only to create the particular conditions for this learning to take place, but also to ensure that participants take responsibility for their own learning process. The intention is to empower participants to come to know that they are their own experts and that they already have a ‘fund of relevant experience and skills’ (Segal et al., 2012). This is conveyed in a range of ways including a strong invitation to take care of themselves within the learning process, and only to follow the guidance and participate as much as feels appropriate and right to them. There is an absence of agenda in the sense that the teacher is not endeavouring to create change, but is rather offering a space within which participants can engage in exploration in this moment. The teacher will invite participants to explore their experience, to move towards painful experience and to bring curiosity to all this. This will be done with deep sensitivity to and respect of participants’ boundaries and vulnerabilities as they are in this moment.

In practice, the teacher will ask permission of participants while engaged in exploration together (e.g. ‘Is that enough or shall we go on a little further?’ or ‘would you mind if we explore this together for a bit?’). The teacher demonstrates awareness of and respect for participants’ individual vulnerabilities and need for privacy (e.g. the teacher will move on if participant chooses not to share), and also the particular boundaries and requirements of the participant population being taught.

Key feature 5: Mutuality – engaging with the participants in a mutual collaborative working relationship

A key characteristic of the relational style between participants and teacher is the sense of mutuality and shared exploration. The processes of mind that are under investigation fall into a continuum of experience that *everyone* can relate to. It is impossible for teachers to separate themselves from the process of investigation. In the spirit of adventure that is core to this learning style, the process of exploration within the sessions becomes a collaborative venture between all those engaged in it – there is a feeling of ‘co-journeying’ and of a highly participatory learning process involving participants and teacher alike.

Appropriate use of humour can help to promote engagement, a willingness and openness to engage in learning and exploration, and to establish and maintain an effective collaborative relationship.

Co-teaching

If a teacher is being assessed while working with a co-teacher, the quality of the relationship between the teachers will have a strong influence on the quality of the teaching process for the participants. Each key feature in Domain 2 is as relevant to the co-teaching relationship as it is to the teacher-participant relationship.

If an assessment is happening in a co-teaching context, we recommend that the recording must show the relevant teacher teaching whole practices and doing all the inquiry for the practices s/he teach (i.e. not share teaching such as inquiries or didactic sessions with the co-teacher).

The relevant teacher needs:

- to be recorded teaching at least one of each of the main practices such as the: raisin exercise; minimum of one body scan; minimum of one mindful movement session; minimum of two main sitting meditation practices in different sessions of the course; minimum of two didactic sessions/exercises (e.g. an exercise such as ‘Walking down the street’, teaching such as on depression or stress); and minimum of two different breathing spaces or other short practices.
- to be teaching the group at minimum 50% of the time – if possible more, so that the assessors have the opportunity to see each element more than once.
- to teach at least two whole sessions on his/her own. It’s fine to have the co-teacher there in the session to respond to distressed participants, etc. It’s helpful to explain to the group what is happening around the recording, when agreement is sought, and during the course if appropriate.

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*

N.B.

- 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.

Overarching domain guidance

The domain 'Embodiment' aims to capture the way in which the teacher communicates authenticity as a teacher of mindfulness, through bringing his/her own sustained commitment to the practice of mindfulness into the classroom, to the curriculum and to his/her relationship with programme participants. It is the way through which the practice of mindfulness is tangibly sensed in the classroom. Participants might 'catch' mindfulness rather than be systematically taught it if embodiment is evident in the teaching space.

Authenticity refers to both authenticity to mindfulness and authenticity to self. Embodied mindfulness is not a contrived 'add-on,' but is part of the personhood of the teacher and expressed in a way that is aligned with that person's natural personality style.

A teacher who is *embodying* mindfulness connects with and relates to experience through accepting present moment awareness. When embodying mindfulness, the teacher is: deeply present with participants and their difficulties without moving in to fix things; willing to teach through a felt knowing of their own vulnerability; to bring gentleness and compassion to themselves and participants; to have enough familiarity with this process of being and learning to be able to trust in the unfolding of it; to inspire confidence in using mindfulness processes to turn towards difficulties through their own experience of doing this; and to be able to articulate the subtlety of experience in a way that resonates meaningfully for the participants in the group.

As this process develops, the teacher becomes able to operate within this being mode of mind, non-judgmental, present-centred awareness, even in the sometimes charged and intense environment of the mindfulness-based class. The teacher's actions are thus arising from an openness to the moment in its fullness and uncertainty, and from a willingness to not know the answer. This is significantly different to potentially limiting actions on the part of the teacher that are based on previous expertise, intellectualisations of the current situation, or an inner urge to do something that would help resolve the presenting difficulty.

Embodiment is a natural outcome of the inner work of mindfulness practice that the teacher has engaged in. It is not a striving for a particular state. It does not look a certain way and indeed will present itself differently in different cultures and from individual to individual. It is clear that the teacher 'knows' what s/he is teaching from deep personal experience.

Detailed explanation of the five key features of Domain 3

Key feature 1: Expression of present moment focus through behaviour, verbal and non-verbal communication

The teacher offers a demonstration of present moment focus so that these are observable through the teacher's behaviour and their verbal and non-verbal communication. The expression of embodiment can be particularly sensed through the teacher's body – i.e. steady posture, physical connectedness and grounded-ness, physical sense of ease, calm and alertness, steadiness, rhythm and pitch of voice tone, etc. The teacher is 'at home' with him/herself.

Kabat-Zinn (1990) describes the energy and motivation that is brought to mindfulness practice as 'commitment, self-discipline and intentionality' (i.e. the development of perseverance and resolve to stay with the process of investigation of personal experience). Focused Intentionality is a key area that the teacher is embodying within the teaching process. To set the stage for this particular form of experiential learning, a certain sort of intention and purpose needs to be cultivated. The skilled teacher conveys this through seamless cultivation of mindful awareness within the session. The combination of working in non-striving ways while also being focused, clear and directional forms a paradox that is central and inherent to skilful teaching.

The practice of mindfulness, therefore, encourages us to pay attention to the intention and motivation that we bring to both formal and informal practice, in the class and at home. The teacher is helping participants relate the practice to a 'personally valued vision' (Segal et al., 2002). This is quite subtle and is conveyed through careful use of language, e.g. the phrase 'try to keep your attention on your breath' has quite a different effect from 'as best you can returning the attention to the breath each time it slips away'. The teacher balances the tension between 'non-striving' alongside 'firm intention'.

Key feature 2: Responsiveness to the uniqueness of the present moment – the teacher works with the emergent moment

Key feature 2 relates to the teacher's connection and responsiveness to their own personal internal/external experience during teaching.

All other aspects of the key feature 'present moment focus' are assessed as they arise within the other domains, including:

- **to the individuals within the group** evidenced by appropriate awareness of and responsiveness to 'in the moment' interpersonal issues arising within the process on an individual level (assessed in **Domain 2** (Relational skills));
- **to the group** – evidenced by appropriate awareness of responsiveness to 'in the moment' issues arising within the process on a group level (assessed in **Domain 6** Holding the group learning environment)); and
- **to the teaching process** – evidenced by appropriate responsiveness to curriculum choices (assessed in **Domain 1** (Coverage, pacing and organisation of session

curriculum)) and interactive teaching (assessed in **Domain 5** (Conveying course themes through interactive inquiry and didactic teaching)).

Formal mindfulness practices offer the opportunity to develop a finely tuned ability to 'read the internal weather' of one's being, which can then be brought to the experience of being in relation with another. For teachers, incorporating mindful awareness of their internal and external experience while teaching offers a way to bring a present moment awareness of themselves (thoughts, emotions, sensations and actions) so that they become an embodied example of what is being taught. In particular, this allows the possibility of attending closely to the ever-shifting 'feeling tone' within the body and of using this invaluable source of information - as a barometer - to check in with and inform responses to participants. The teachers' present moment focus is grounded through their connection with this personal direct experience. Their responses to individuals, to the group and to the teaching process are informed and supported by this sense of connectedness to personal direct experience, which allows for truly authentic responsiveness.

In practice, this process is evidenced by a relaxed calmness, alertness, aliveness and vitality shown through language, bodily expression and behaviour. The teacher's sensitivity to personal direct experience influences his/her choices within the group (e.g. through the use of breathing spaces to open participants to difficulty arising within the group). The teacher embodies a sense of 'surrender' to the moment and to what is needed now. There is a demonstration to the group of 'mindfulness in action' – a lived example of the essence of mindfulness practice and principles. The teacher operates predominantly in a 'being' rather than 'doing' mode of mind. The teacher is immersed in the process.

The teacher will use his/her attentional skills in both a wide and narrow angle way at different moments within the teaching. At times the teacher will guide the focus very clearly to one particular aspect of experience, and at others widen it, to encourage participants' minds to open to new learning and possibilities.

The attitudinal quality of 'beginner's mind' is part of this key feature (i.e. the teacher communicates a willingness to 'suspend' judgement and approaches experience with a fresh interest and curiosity). So rather than seeing things through a fog of preconceptions, the possibility arises of bringing clarity and vitality to experience. The teacher supports participants to develop a perspective on their experience that is not based on their history.

The attitudinal quality of 'letting be' is also part of this key feature (i.e. the inquiry 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 tangled in its content). 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

Key feature 3: Simultaneously conveying steadiness, calm, ease, non-reactivity, alertness and vitality

Mindfulness training develops the capacity to have a steady mind that is simultaneously alert and vital. In this way, there is a greater chance that the inevitable inner reactivity that emerges in the form of constellations of thoughts, emotions and body sensations are seen as they arise. A teacher who has trained these skills through mindfulness practice will bring this spirit into the teaching process. Thus, even within the sometimes charged and fluid atmosphere of a mindfulness-based class, there is evidence of the teacher bringing steadiness and calm along with an enlivened vitality and alert responsiveness to the moment.

All teachers will have many moments in class that don't feel relaxed and calm, as well as moments when they do not know how to skilfully be with and respond. The embodied teacher is able to fully feel his/her discomfort/anxiety etc., and to teach from that discomfort. Rather than trying to get rid of it or cover it up, the embodied teacher knows how to be stable within the discomfort, to allow him/herself to feel it, to ground him/herself, to breathe and relate to the discomfort in a steady, stable way. The teacher may explicitly articulate this process or may just enact it. Either way, it is communicated to participants. Allowing the vulnerability of the teacher to be skilfully visible in the process can empower participants to know that they too can do this – they don't have to be 'perfect.'

Key feature 4: Allowing – the teacher's behaviour is non-judging, patient, accepting and non-striving

- **Non-judging.** The teacher supports participants to become aware of their inner and outer experience just as it is. There is an invitation to be non-judging of experience – including the tendency to judge! The teacher and participant are developing a stance of 'impartial witness' to experience. The teacher brings an intention not to judge his/her own personal experience or the participant's expressed experience, but instead to cultivate an attitude of friendly interest to it.
- **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. The teacher allows periods of silence to occur within dialogue (e.g. the teacher allows for some periods of silence after questions giving participants time to sense, feel and think).
- **Trust.** This involves conveying confidence in the process of bringing mindful attention to experience. The teacher communicates a confidence in the validity of thoughts, emotions, sensations and the perceptions/intuitions arising out of connection with these. The teacher conveys a sense of trust in the participants' expertise in relation to their own experience. The practice followed by inquiry offers a structure and a process for enabling us to witness personal experience and an encouragement to rely on the validity of this evidence. Teacher conveys a sense of trust in mindfulness (without being defensive) even in the face of doubt, scepticism or resistance from the group.
- **Non-striving.** The teacher embodies an attitude of willingness to allow the present to be the way it is and for each participant to be the way they are. The process is explicitly not trying to fix problems or attain specific goals, but rather is intending to uncover

an awareness of the actuality of experience, and a willingness to let it be/work with it as it is. The process of mindfulness offers the opportunity to step aside from the habitual process of endeavouring to 'improve ourselves' and 'trying' to reach a new place. The paradox of the learning process is that although there are clear reasons for us all being engaged in an exploration of how we deal with the pain of our lives, there is nothing to be achieved here that is not already present in this moment. This is conveyed through the teacher's 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. The teacher models accepting self, others and experience with an attitude of friendliness. The teacher is not overly anxious to 'get things right,' tolerates unsatisfactory or difficult issues with ease, and relinquishes personal agendas.

Key feature 5: Natural presence of the teacher – the teacher's behaviour is authentic to his/her own intrinsic mode of operating

One way to describe this is 'being the person whose story you have lived' (p.92, McCown et al., 2010). The teacher communicates through his/her own unique, authentic and natural style of being as opposed to contriving a certain style (e.g. perhaps taking on a set of behaviours that are an idea of what an embodied mindfulness teacher 'should' look like!).

How this happens is as individual as each person is. The teacher is uncontrived, and shows up in the classroom space in a natural way as they are. Although this cannot be directly assessed from a teaching observation, there is a sense of natural continuity to the way the teacher presents as 'the teacher' and how s/he is in other arenas of his/her life.

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 a balance of spaciousness and 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).*

N.B.

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

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).

Key feature 1: Language is clear, precise, accurate and accessible while conveying spaciousness

General points:

- Accessibility, i.e. using everyday/ordinary language and avoiding mindfulness jargon/esoteric language.
- 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 from page 31)

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 pointedly on the breath, for example, 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)
- 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 (embodiment).

When reviewing the teaching be attentive to the presence/absence within practice guidance 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/or simply bringing awareness to the experience of this.'
- Avoiding language that might feed into a sense of striving, e.g. words such as 'trying,' 'working,' 'seeing if you can...' can be unhelpful.
- Spaciousness, i.e. balancing silence with guidance, and using language economically.
- Using present participles (*attending*, *bringing* awareness,' etc.) to convey a feeling of guiding/inviting rather than ordering, to reduce resistance.
- 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 and 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 practice

Raisin practice – making key learning available through guidance (Key feature 2):

- Experiencing the difference between mindful awareness and automatic pilot
- Experiencing how bringing attention to experience can reveal new aspects to it and can transform our experience of it
- The present is the only time we have to know anything
- Experiencing how the mind wanders

Raisin practice – elements to consider in guiding (Key feature 3):

- Hygiene considerations –use a spoon, clean bowl and new box of raisins. Pour out raisins in front of participants, kitchen paper to hand.
- Offer the option not to eat raisin, but 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 ‘feeling’ 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.
- In the inquiry there are several areas that can be explored with participants:
 - encourage lots of direct noticing of the sensations of the experience from all senses
 - elicit observations about how it might have felt different from their usual experience of eating a raisin
 - help the group to gather observations about the nature of our minds, the ways we generally pay attention and how this relates to our well-being. In particular the following themes may emerge in the group dialogue:
 - (a) If we are on autopilot, we cannot see our moods begin to change or go down, or notice stress rising.
 - (b) The raisin practice can help us realise that there are other things to be seen, that there is more to life than our 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’, open way may show us aspects of our experience that we had not seen before; the experience itself is different.
 - (c) The mind is always making associations from present-moment experience to memories, deeper level understanding, stories, etc., but we are not usually aware of where it is taking us. Mostly we do not *choose* where our mind goes and we see how difficult mind states might easily take hold when we are unawares, because analysing the past and worrying about the future can be ‘second nature’ to us.
 - (d) Differences exist between eating this way and usual attitudes to eating; impulses around food are often unconscious, powerful and uncontrolled.

Body Scan

Body scan – make key learning available through guidance (Key feature 2), including:

- 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)
- Guidance about how to handle difficulties (sleepiness, discomfort, etc.) by taking care of self (making personal choices) and not seeing difficulties as a problem
- Guidance on allowing things to be as they are – no goals to be achieved, no special state, no right way for the body to feel
- Guidance to direct breath through/to different parts of the body and directing attention to the experience of this
- Guidance on beginning to *notice* and *relate differently to* our sensations and mental states, including boredom, irritation, impulses, etc.

Body scan – elements to consider in guiding (Key feature 3), including:

- 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, tingling, numbness, etc.
- Give participants the option to come back to the breath at any time to stabilise their attention and 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.
- Be precise in guiding where and how participants to place attention.
- Vary instructions between both narrow angle, detailed awareness of a small part of the body, and also 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 distraction.
- Offer guidance that invites participants to move into a direct 'being with' body sensations rather than looking at them from a distance.
- Offer skilful guidance of awareness of breath within the body scan.
- 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

Sitting meditation – make key learning available through guidance (Key feature 2):

- Anchoring to the present moment through body sensations
- Dealing skilfully with mind-wandering
- Learning gentleness, encouraging curiosity, learning acceptance
- Noticing a mindful ‘feel of things’ (pleasant/unpleasant/neutral)
- Noticing aversion
- Learning to consciously widen and narrow the focus 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.

Sitting meditation – elements to consider in guiding (Key feature 3):

Posture...

Give practical information on helpful posture using a chair, stool, cushion. Support the transition from ‘doing’ into ‘being’ mode of mind. A clear focus on posture at the beginning of the practice helps to establish the intention of the practice and to facilitate the transition into this period of deliberate cultivation of ‘being mode.’

Breath...

- Anchoring in the present moment (e.g. reconnecting with a specific aspect of experience in the here and now)
- Offering guidance on where in the body to pay attention to breath sensations
- Avoiding of language that encourages thinking about the breath rather than being directly in connection with it

Body sensations...

- Transition from breath - expand the attention around the sensations of breathing to an awareness of sensations in the body as a whole
- Offering explicit guidance about how/where to place attention
- Offering 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
- Acknowledging challenge (not setting up a specific idea of how we ‘should’ see thoughts)
- Using the breath as an anchor when the mind becomes unsettled
- Expanding attention to include emotions, naming these, seeing arising as body sensations

Mindfulness of the full range of experience (i.e. choiceless 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 breath as an anchor as often as is needed

The three step breathing space (3SBS) (core practice in MBCT/often included in other MBIs)

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 of the breath in a particular place in the body.

Step 3. Expanding the awareness into the body as a whole using the particular sensations of the breath as an anchor, while opening to the range of experience being perceived.

The three step breathing space – 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 eight weeks*** (see Segal et al., 2013 for details)

Mindful movement

Mindful movement elements to consider in guiding (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 of our physical limitations, and learning to relate in new ways to pain
- Learning new ways of taking care of ourselves

Mindful movement – 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
- Always encouraging participants to err on the side of caution
- Always 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...

- Generally, guiding participants to breathe in as they form the intention to move and then to move with the out breath
- 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, including...

- Giving plenty of space within the practice:
 - Dwelling in the postures long enough to let go into them
 - Resting between postures to enable the effects of the movement to be sensed
- Encouraging participants to explore and discover the creative edge between exploring / investigating / discovering, and accepting / letting be / being with.

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

Overview: 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.

A large part of each session is taken up by interactive teaching processes, including: 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 training in 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. The way the teacher works in these moments should be given weight in the overall assessment 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*

N.B.

- 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. Embodiment of mindfulness is a crucial underpinning to interactive teaching and should be assessed under **Domain 3** (Embodiment of 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).

Key feature 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.

The teaching process has an experiential focus and supports participants reconnect with their direct experience (with a particular emphasis on sensations in the body). It uses this experiential 'data' as a starting point for exploration and learning. When the dialogue moves into conceptualisations/abstractions from immediacy of experience/stories about experience, the teacher leads the participants back towards connection with immediate experience. Participants are given opportunities to become aware of and discriminate between the different elements of direct experience – sensations, thoughts, and emotions – at times retrospectively tracking these as they arose in a mindfulness practice and at other times tracking them now as they arise in the moment.

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

- Use of open questions, rather than closed questions that only require a “yes” or “no” answer
- Questions/statements that open space, such as: “Would you be willing to tell me more?”
- Use “how?” or “what?” rather than “why?” questions
- Avoiding questions/statements that close/fill the space (e.g. yes/no, fixing/solutions, and self stories)
- Using attentive and positive non-verbals
- Alternating questions and statements
- Opening the space to create and recognise possibilities
- Sensing when inquiry is appropriate in group discussions (e.g. sometimes a question needs an answer, sometimes inquiry, sometimes nothing but ‘thank you’ or a smile)
- Maintaining humility – the other person is the expert in their own experience

Key feature 2: Exploring the different layers within the inquiry process (e.g. direct experience, reflection on direct experience, and linking both to wider learning) with a predominant focus on process rather than content.

How much time is allowed for the actuality of experience and relationship with experience to be explored before introducing broader teaching themes?

The dialogue can be perceived as having **three concentric circles and layers of inquiry** (see also Figure 1 on p.32):

1. Layer 1: *noticing* sensations, thoughts, feelings (direct experience within self)

Areas of exploration/questioning include:

- What did you notice? (e.g. physical sensations, including sounds, feelings, colours, textures and movement)
- How did it feel?
- Where were these occurring – specific location or through the whole body?
- Did the sensations change or were they constant?
- What were the emotions/feelings, and thoughts connected to them?
- What thoughts arose about now, the past, the future?
- When your mind wandered, where did it go?

Examples of:

- Thoughts....memories, worries, planning, time, food, etc?
- Sensations....restlessness, pain, hot/cold, heavy/light, etc?
- Emotions....sad, angry, fearful, happy, secure, loving, etc?

2. Layer 2: *dialoguing about* immediate experience (i.e. placing the direct noticing in a personal context of understanding. Noticing patterns of reactivity to direct experience) **e.g.:**

- How did you feel when your mind wandered/when you felt the tightness in your abdomen, etc?
- What did you do when your mind wandered (let it wander, get involved in the thoughts, bring it back – with gentleness, firmness, guilt, annoyance, amusement, judgement, etc.)?
- Explore the sensations of reactions/responses (e.g. what were the sensations of gentleness, guilt, pushing away, holding on, tuning out, opening to, etc?)
- How did bringing awareness to this experience affect it?
- Is this pattern of experience that you describe familiar, and if so, in what ways?

3. Layer 3: linking them to the aims of the programme (placing the learning in layers 1 and 2 in a wider context of understanding)

How this happens will depend on the key aims for the MBI. Within MBSR, this linkage process is in relation to the broad application of mindfulness skills to the areas of living life, managing stress, communicating, making choices about self-care, and so on. The encouragement is for participants themselves to begin naturally to make the links by applying the learning from the programme to their lives. This is done through integrating the mindfulness-based learning material offered in the programme into their daily lives.

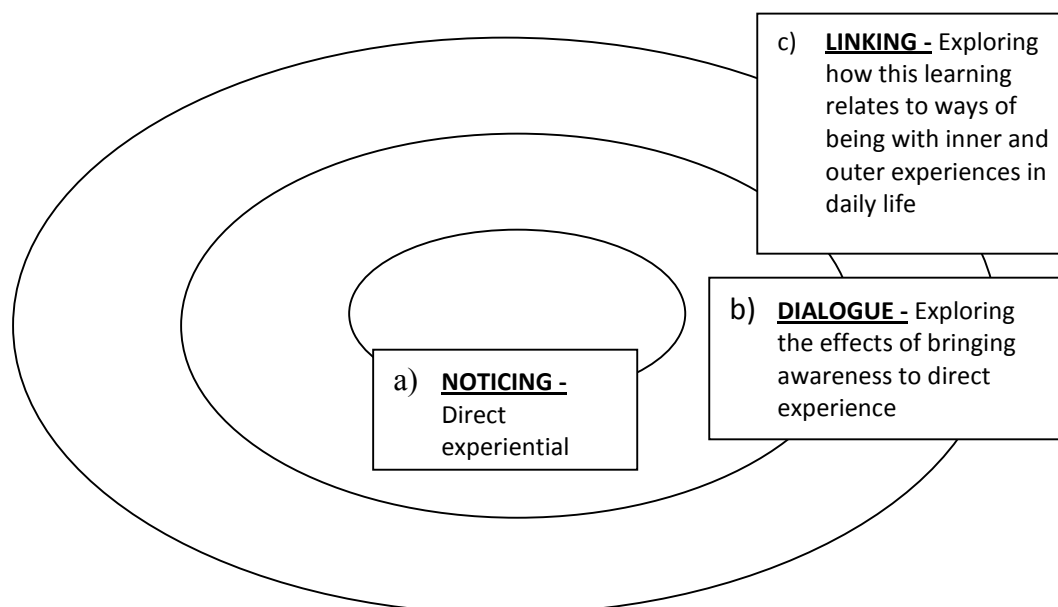
This is true also in MBCT, but there is a greater emphasis within the linkage process on connecting direct experience and learning with an understanding of the particular vulnerability that the programme is adapted for (e.g. relapse prevention in depression, chronic fatigue, etc.). This process is held mainly by the teacher who supports participants to integrate their direct experience with contextual understanding about the particular challenge they are working with.

So linkage is helping participants to illuminate how they see:

- The ways in which their mind becomes ‘caught’ or stuck through their particular way of relating to experience
- The ways in which their learning about mindfulness has relevance within the various spheres of their life
- The ways in which their learning about mindfulness has relevance to the particular vulnerability that they are working with (e.g. susceptibility to depression, chronic fatigue etc. See Chapter 12, *Inquiry*, in Segal, Williams & Teasdale, 2012 on how to do this while staying close to participants’ direct experience.).

In any inquiry process, it is important that the teacher takes time with each ‘circle’ and, if the group rushes to discuss or ‘talk about,’ to allow time for participants to come back to simply describing what they noticed. There is no need to stick rigidly to a certain ‘progression’ through the inquiry; it is better for the teacher to see the ‘circles’ as a *map* of the territory that might be covered in a range of ways depending on what is emergent within the group.

Figure 1: The three concentric circles and layers of inquiry



Key feature 3: Conveying learning themes through skilful teaching

The critical area to consider in this key feature is: how effective is the teaching process in conveying the course themes in ways that enable participants to integrate the learning? How this happens will vary from teacher to teacher, and from group to group, including:

- *Effective didactic teaching/psychoeducation.* Where possible, didactic material is ‘woven’ into/from lived experience (i.e. the teacher collaborates with participants to link direct observations of experience to learning that is relevant to the participant and to the aims of the programme). When teaching didactically, the teaching: is stimulating; brief; clear; engages all elements of experiencing (thinking, sensing and feeling); and encourages interactive responses from participants’ own experience.
- *Linkage to theory.* Jung’s well known quote is apt here: ‘Learn your theories as well as you can, but put them aside when you touch the miracle of the living soul’ (1928). The mindfulness-based teacher knows the underpinning theoretical principles thoroughly so that they can inform direction and emphasis within the teaching process. This means they are readily available for moments of didactic teaching, while maintaining connection to the immediacy of emerging themes within the group.
- *Experiential engagement.* The teaching process is playful, alive, responsive, draws on all ways in which human beings experience – thinking, sensing and feeling – and aims to engage all these elements within participants during the teaching. Although much of the material for exploration within the group is generated by the participants, rather than by the teacher, it is also the teacher’s responsibility to bring in carefully chosen material to inform and add context and understanding to the processes that are under exploration. The mindfulness-based teaching process is designed generally to convey the themes *implicitly* (through an experiential process of personal discovery) rather than *explicitly* (through a conceptual process of understanding principles and rationales).

- *Concise, accessible and clear.* The teaching crystallises key themes and processes.
- *Playful, alive and responsive.* The teaching is engaging and inspiring; the participants and the teacher are mutually engaged in a creative exploration of the material; it is a highly ‘in the moment process’ where the teacher is responsive to the material as it arises in the moment rather than working from a plan or script; the teacher supports participants to navigate towards aspects of the material that are highly relevant to the immediacy of participants’ experience; the teacher skilfully deflects participants from getting stuck in their stories, and instead keeps the focus on immediate experience. Through examples or activities, the teacher brings the curriculum to life in line with the aims and intentions.
- *Use of teaching aids.* The teacher makes skilful and appropriate use of a flip chart or other teaching aids (the provision of appropriate teaching aids is assessed in **Domain 1** (Coverage, pacing and organisation of session curriculum); the use of teaching aids is assessed here). The teacher integrates direct experiential teaching with teaching drawn from other sources (e.g. stories, poetry and quotations, which point to other ways of experiencing).

Key feature 4: Fluency – the teacher conveys ease, familiarity with and confident knowledge of the material.

This key feature includes:

- *Ease.* The teacher is ‘at home’ within the curriculum, teaching process and material.
- *Familiarity with the material.* 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 conveys knowledge and experience, which inspires confidence in the process of the teaching. This confidence (different to knowing the answers to things) is based not only in a confidence in the process of the teaching, but also in a sense of being comfortable with not knowing what will happen next and bringing to it an open, curious attitude of ‘let’s explore this together and see where it takes us.’

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 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.

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,' and demonstrates authority and potency without imposing the teacher's views on participants.*

Key feature 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

Given the interactive, participatory and moment-to-moment dynamic of MBI teaching, there is much that is unpredictable and unknown. Each group will be different, a co-creation between the participants and the teacher. The teacher's role within this is to create the conditions within which the learning can take place. This requires attention to creating both a place of safety and also a place in which participants examine themselves in ways that they may never previously have done. Both aspects of this paradox need to be in place.

Attending to safety

The teacher clearly works with sensitivity to the inevitable vulnerabilities that can arise in participants through being a member of a group. For example, s/he responds skilfully to expressions of difference and to competition within the group, holding boundaries while demonstrating acceptance and curiosity. S/he is attuned to and able to manage the basic group 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 issues are comprehensively addressed
- the intention of the group is clearly conveyed (implicitly and at times explicitly)
- digressions away from the core intention of the group or away from established norms of MBI teaching processes are promptly responded to so that the working ethos of the group is maintained
- participants are encouraged to adopt towards each other the attitudes that are being cultivated within the group (e.g. respect for each other’s contributions, stepping back from giving each other advice)
- encouragement to express and explore a range of different experiences among group members, including both positive or negative experiences. This cultivates a sense that there is room in the group for all experience to be safely explored.

Key feature 2: Group development – clear management of group development processes over the eight weeks, particularly the management of beginnings, endings and challenges from within the group

The teacher deliberately works with and responds to group development processes with appropriate management of: beginnings (including establishing safety, ground rules, confidentiality, group norms, etc., both at the beginning and then as appropriate as the group develops); ‘storming’ (turning towards and working with difficulty in appropriate ways within the group); and endings (deliberately working with ending processes by preparing for the end of the group from session six onwards, allowing space to acknowledge the impact of ending, exploring experiences/concerns relating to the end of the group, and attending to on-going needs).

The teacher demonstrates the ability to deal effectively with challenging participants, including those who dominate the discussion, are combative, or undermine the teaching process (e.g. the teacher: reminds participants of the guidelines; is invitational rather than coercive; avoids defensiveness or emotional reactivity in the face of challenge; and displays genuine curiosity about participant’s experiences regardless of the nature of the experience).

Key feature 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.

The teacher deliberately uses the group context, within which the learning happens, to underline the general nature of the human mind. The teacher takes opportunities to normalise experience within the group. At the same time, inquiry involves engaging with an individual within the context of the group. The teacher needs to balance these processes by drawing out – from the particularities of the individual – the generalities 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, i.e. 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?”

At times, the teacher will ‘harvest’ experience across the breadth of the group and, at other times, will explore in a more in-depth way with one participant. The teacher will regularly scan round the group, so that even when inquiring with one individual, the whole group will be included in awareness.

The internal process of the teacher will include bringing a deliberate focus of attention towards the group process. Because much of this will take place internally, it will be observable only on a subtle level or, perhaps, not at all. However, the teacher will be enabled through this internal process to attune to, and then respond, to shifts in group energy and/or the prevailing moods (e.g. restlessness, anxiety) through making choices. These choices might involve moving the group on, shifting focus, inserting a mindfulness practice, and/or actively acknowledging felt experience in the group, etc.

The understanding of ‘universal vulnerability’ will thread through the teaching so that there is a repeated sense of depersonalising suffering and seeing common patterns. In practice, the teacher might frequently use ‘we/us/our’ language. For example, s/he might say, “yes, we can all react like that, can’t we,” etc.

The teacher may notice and acknowledge the way one person’s experience affects others in the group (e.g. distress rippling around the circle), and will be able to pause to support and hold this.

Key feature 4: Leadership style that offers sustained 'holding,' and demonstrating authority and potency without imposing the teacher's views on participants.

The teacher's leadership style conveys a sense of:

- *purposefulness of intention* (this is different from striving for particular outcomes)
- *confidence and trust* in the process of bringing mindful attention to experience. Trust in this context arises out of the experience the teacher has in this process; through this, s/he is able also to invite the trust of participants to engage in this learning process over the eight weeks with an open mind.
- *potency* – the teacher carries influence and authority in a way that inspires the respect of participants and simultaneously encourages them to look towards their own expertise.
- *authority* – *although* it is important to convey confidence, it is unhelpful to convey a strong sense of expertise, or of always knowing the answers. The approach is one of co-journeying – a sense of mutual exploration – 'let's explore this together.' The teacher and participants can then relate to each other based on what they learn and share. The connection is compassionate – a sense of deep understanding of the challenges that we all face. This important sense that the teacher stands side-by-side with the participants within the process of exploration is balanced with the teacher needing to convey confidence and a sense of authority.

A teacher's authority is not hierarchical. It is grounded in a clear sense of being thoroughly 'at home' within this process of learning and of knowing this process well because s/he has trodden this path, too. The authority is derived from: personal practice; psychological and spiritual development; experience of teaching mindfulness; and expertise in a professional discipline. When the teacher talks or acts from this material, her/his real or symbolic authorship of it is evident because both the teacher's person and the knowledge s/he reveals speaks volumes (McCown et al., 2010). The confidence that this stance instils can free participants to feel contained and safe. It can enable them to trust and open to the process, and help them develop a sense that there is something here to lean on while they engage in this learning process. In order for participants to be able to disclose and explore difficult material, they must have trust and confidence in the teacher.

The Universities of Bangor, Exeter and Oxford

Summary Version of the

**Mindfulness-based Interventions
Teaching Assessment Criteria**

(MBI:TAC)

This summary version should be used in conjunction with the MBI:TAC manual to assess the competence and adherence of mindfulness-based programme teaching.

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Introduction

The purpose of the Mindfulness-based Interventions Teaching Assessment Criteria (MBI:TAC) is to enable the assessment of teacher adherence and competence when delivering Mindfulness-based Interventions (MBIs). The MBI:TAC has been developed since 2008 in teaching, training and research contexts primarily to assess Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) teaching, but it has also been used for a range of other MBIs derived from these programmes.

This summary version is intended for assessors who have been trained in the use of the MBI:TAC and should be used in conjunction with the full MBI:TAC manual. It is essential that assessors undertake the earlier training and developmental steps outlined in the manual before using the MBI:TAC to assess competence in others.

This summary of the MBI:TAC includes a high-level overview of the criteria as well as concise descriptors for each of the six domains. The MBI:TAC's six domains of competence and six levels of competence are summarised below, and score sheets for each can be found at the end of this document.

The six domains of competence within the MBI:TAC

Domain 1: Coverage, pacing and organisation of session curriculum (page 51)

Domain 2: Relational skills (page 53)

Domain 3: Embodiment of mindfulness (page 55)

Domain 4: Guiding mindfulness practices (page 57)

Domain 5: Conveying course themes through interactive inquiry and didactic teaching (page 59)

Domain 6: Holding the group learning environment (page 61)

Levels of Competence and Adherence in MBI:TAC
(adapted from the Dreyfus Scale of Competence, 1986)

Competence band	Generic definition of overall competence level	Numerical band
Incompetent <i>The teaching demonstrates an absence of key features, highly inappropriate performance, or behaviour that is harmful.</i>	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 <i>The teaching demonstrates basic building blocks of MBI competence in at least one feature.</i>	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 <i>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.</i>	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 <i>Teaching is competent, with some problems and/or inconsistencies</i>	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 <i>Sustained competence demonstrated with few or minor problems and/or inconsistencies.</i>	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 <i>Excellent teaching practice, or very good even in the face of participant difficulties</i>	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. S/he has deep tacit understanding of the issues and is 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

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:

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

N.B.

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

The table overleaf is an example of issues that may arise.

To make ratings, use the levels of competency grid alongside the key features.

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

	Examples
Incompetent	MBI session curriculum not covered or highly inappropriate. No attempt was made to structure session time. Session seemed aimless, overly rigid, or harmful.
Beginner	<p>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.</p> <p>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).</p>
Advanced Beginner	<p>At least two of the five key features are present at a competent level, but difficulty and/or inconsistency is clearly evident in others.</p> <p>Examples include: some skill is evidenced in maintaining the form of the programme or covering the curriculum shown, but significant curriculum element 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).</p>
Competent	<p>All key features present to a good level of skill with some minor inconsistencies.</p> <p>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.</p>
Proficient	<p>All key features consistently present.</p> <p>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.</p>
Advanced	<p>All key features present to a high skill level.</p> <p>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.'</p>

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:

6. *Authenticity and potency* – relating in a way which seems genuine, honest and confident
7. *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
8. *Compassion and warmth* – conveying a deep awareness, sensitivity, appreciation and openness to participants' experience
9. *Curiosity and respect* – conveying genuine interest in each participant and his/her experience while respecting each participants' vulnerabilities, boundaries and need for privacy
10. *Mutuality* – engaging with the participants in a mutual and collaborative working relationship

N.B.

- iii. The relational aspect to mindfulness teaching is particularly related to **Domain 3** (Embodiment of mindfulness).
- iv. The intention in Domain 2 is to encompass those parts of the process that rely on the interpersonal connection between individual participants and teacher.

The table overleaf is an example of issues that may apply.

To make ratings, use the levels of competency grid alongside the key features.

Domain 2: Relational skills (cont)

	Examples
Incompetent	<p>Teacher has poor relational and interpersonal skills.</p> <p>Examples include: consistently 'missing the point' of what participants are communicating; aspects of the interpersonal process are destructive.</p>
Beginner	<p>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.</p> <p>Examples include: acceptance of participants not demonstrated; lack of attuned attention; lack of sensitivity to participant vulnerability; teacher putting him/herself outside the process.</p>
Advanced Beginner	<p>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.</p> <p>Example includes: teacher's style at times impedes his/her ability to establish a relationship that enables engaged exploration (i.e. lack of connection, responsiveness, curiosity not conveyed, hesitant style, intellectualisation, and judgemental tone).</p>
Competent	<p>All key features are present to a good level of skill with some minor inconsistencies.</p> <p>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 him/herself into the learning process (mutuality).</p>
Proficient	<p>All key features are consistently present with few minor inconsistencies.</p> <p>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.</p>
Advanced	<p>All key features present to a high skill level.</p> <p>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.'</p>

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:

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

N.B.

- iii. 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 to **the group process** is assessed in **Domain 6** (Holding the group learning environment).
- iv. 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.

The table overleaf is an example of issues that may apply.

To make ratings use the levels of competency grid alongside the key features.

Domain 3: Embodiment of mindfulness (cont)

	Examples
Incompetent	<p>Embodiment of mindfulness is not conveyed.</p> <p>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.</p>
Beginner	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
Advanced Beginner	<p>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.</p> <p>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).</p>
Competent	<p>All key features present to a good level of skill with some minor inconsistencies.</p> <p>Examples include: teacher generally demonstrates an ability to communicate the attitudinal qualities of mindfulness practice through his/her bodily presence and is mostly present moment focused/responsive; teacher mostly seems natural and at ease.</p>
Proficient	<p>All key features consistently present with a good level of skill.</p> <p>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.</p>
Advanced	<p>All key features present to a high-skill level.</p> <p>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 him/herself and to the qualities of mindfulness. Difficult for reviewer to find further 'learning needs' to feedback.</p>

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).*

N.B.

- iii. The embodiment of mindfulness is a crucial underpinning to practice guidance, and should be assessed under **Domain 3** (Embodiment of mindfulness).
- iv. 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 guiding considerations for the each of the core practices which are detailed in the manual.

The table overleaf is an example of issues that may apply.

To make ratings, use the levels of competency grid alongside the key features.

Domain 4: Guiding mindfulness practices (cont)

	Examples
Incompetent	Guidance is inaccurate and unclear. Key feature(s) of guiding practices are absent. The guidance offers an unsafe holding atmosphere.
Beginner	<p>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.</p> <p>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).</p>
Advanced Beginner	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
Competent	<p>All key features present to a good level of skill with some minor inconsistencies.</p> <p>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.</p>
Proficient	<p>All key features consistently present with a good level of skill.</p> <p>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.</p>
Advanced	<p>All key features present to a high skill level.</p> <p>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.</p>

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*

N.B.

- v. 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).
- vi. 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).
- vii. Embodiment of mindfulness is a crucial underpinning to interactive teaching and should be assessed under **Domain 3** (Embodiment of mindfulness).
- viii. Inquiry relies on there being skilful relational connection between teacher and participant (**Domain 2** - Relational Skills) and skilful holding of the group (**Domain 6** - Holding the group Learning Environment). Assessing this domain requires delineation of these aspects to the process within these other domains.

The table overleaf is an example of issues that may apply.

To make ratings use the levels of competency grid alongside the key features.

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

	Examples
Incompetent	<p>Teaching process unclear and inconsistent with principles of mindfulness-based teaching.</p> <p>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.</p>
Beginner	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
Advanced Beginner	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
Competent	<p>All key features present to a good level of skill with some minor inconsistencies.</p> <p>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.</p>
Proficient	<p>All key features consistently present.</p> <p>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.</p>
Advanced	<p>All key features present to a high skill level.</p> <p>Examples include: highly skilful and inspiring teaching skills 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.</p>

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:

- (ii) 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.*
- (iii) 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.*
- (iv) Personal to universal learning – the teacher consistently opens the learning process towards connection with the universality and common humanity of the processes under exploration.*
- (v) Leadership style – offers sustained 'holding,' demonstrates authority and potency without imposing the teacher's views on participants.*

The table overleaf is an example of issues that may apply.

To make ratings use levels of competency grid alongside the key features.

Domain 6: Holding the group learning environment (cont)

	Examples
Incompetent	Group learning environment is managed ineffectively and unsafely.
Beginner	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
Advanced Beginner	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
Competent	<p>All key features present to a good level of skill with some minor inconsistencies.</p> <p>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.</p>
Proficient	<p>All key features consistently present.</p> <p>Examples include: teacher demonstrates well-developed skills working with and facilitating the group learning environment; teacher skilfully includes the group in the field of his/her 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.</p>
Advanced	<p>All key features present to a high skill level.</p> <p>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.</p>

The Bangor, Exeter and Oxford

**Mindfulness-Based Interventions
Teaching Assessment Criteria
(MBI:TAC TEACH)**

Addendum for Mindfulness Training in Schools

This addendum includes contributions from Richard Burnett, Rebecca Crane, Chris Cullen, Tamsin Ford, Mark Greenberg, Trish Jennings, Willem Kuyken, Liz Lord, Dominic Morris and Sarah Silverton (alphabetical order).

Background and context

The MBI:TAC was developed to assess the competence and adherence of MBI teaching (Crane et al., 2012). It has been extensively used in training and research contexts and shows promising psychometric properties (Crane et al., 2013). This addendum should be used alongside the latest version of the full MBI:TAC manual and summary. It adds additional information to enable the MBI:TAC to be used to rate classroom teachers teaching mindfulness to young people in school contexts. With thanks to Mark Greenberg and Trish Jennings for sharing their mindfulness in schools fidelity scale.

Assessors should themselves be proficient MBI teachers and normally also be school classroom teachers.

The additional adherence checklist at the end of this document relates to the .b curriculum developed by the Mindfulness in Schools Project. Assessors should normally have been trained in .b themselves to complete these ratings or be very familiar with the curriculum and issues in teaching the curriculum.

Domain 1: Coverage, pacing and organisation of session curriculum

- The curriculum is presented in a clear and engaging way in accordance with the instructions in the teacher manual
- Materials (visual aids, pupil materials) are prepared in advance to facilitate the lesson flow
- The teacher adapts well to any constraints under which s/he is working (e.g. time of lesson, size and lay out of classroom, black out blinds etc.)
- Teacher shows patience with how the program unfolds by not giving students more information than they can handle in the early parts of the curriculum (e.g. that they should 'turn toward the unpleasant' in the first class, etc.).
- Teacher avoids working in a highly task-oriented way (e.g. trying to complete as many activities as possible, not processing experiences fully, appearing rushed, harried, etc.).
- Teacher is able to **balance the goals of the lesson while responding to spontaneous events** (e.g. teacher uses students' comments and questions as a means to further group understanding; teacher skilfully brings the group's attention back to the main focus of the lesson when attention has been diverted, etc.).

Domain 2: Relational skills

- Teacher uses effective **nonverbal and verbal communication** skills with students:
 - Facial expressions are *congruent* with felt emotions and verbal expression;
 - Demonstrates *attentive body language* (eye contact, encouraging gestures, positive facial expressions, nodding, etc.)
 - Notices and reflects feelings and thoughts of students accurately using *reflections of feeling* and *paraphrases*;

- Teacher demonstrates authentic **compassion, warmth, respect and interest** in working with students. (e.g. teacher displays authentically warm and friendly affect, listens with full attention, thanks students for participating, encourages and supports participation, invites students' observations and comments but does so without coercion and makes an effort to learn and use pupils' names)
- Teacher is mindful of the boundaries about how appropriate it is for students to share more personal thoughts and feelings in a classroom context, given the lack of confidentiality in a school environment. For example, knows when to stop them for their own wellbeing. Moves on if students do not choose to share at the moment, encourages student sharing as a way of modelling respect for the importance of the experiences and the value of the observation process (**trust**).

Pupils with special educational needs and disability (SEND) or behavioural issues are skilfully managed in the classroom. For example, a pupil with attentional and/or behavioural difficulties is able to learn as much as possible from the course whilst causing minimal disruption to the class dynamic. If they are unable to participate, the teacher skilfully deals with the situation by, for example, from encouraging them to quietly get on with another activity, or rest their head on desk and sleep, or quietly listen to music on headphones. This is with a view to enabling the learning of the whole class.

- The learning process is **collaborative** and involves both teacher and students alike (e.g. teacher points out, when appropriate, how everyone shares the experiences being discussed- wandering mind, difficult emotions- so that no student feels isolated, etc.).

Domain 3: Embodiment of mindfulness

- Teacher demonstrates willingness to **step out of 'teacher mode'** to the extent that she/he does not engage class in lengthy analytical or didactic interactions, is comfortable not knowing an answer without defensiveness. Teacher shows willingness to suspend judgment about correctness or incorrectness of any experience and simply takes a fresh look at situations (**beginner's mind**).
- Teacher knows when to mindfully step in and out of 'teacher mode' if disruptive behaviour is impeding the progress of the lesson and class control is becoming an issue. Teacher shows willingness to be firm and use sanctions, without losing their presence and sense of perspective.
- Teacher allows periods of silence to occur within discussions or while processing practice, should the classroom dynamic allow this. If the mood of the class permits it, teacher allows for some periods of silence after questions with a wait time of approx.10-15 sec. giving students sufficient time to sense, feel and think before responding).
- Teacher models willingness to be with situations as they are without needing to change or fix them (**non-striving**).
- Teacher demonstrates compassionate acceptance of self and students given the reality of the present moment situation in the class (e.g. not being defensive or overly anxious to 'get things right', tolerates less than optimal class participation flexibly, maintains motivation to keep going despite class resistance, may relinquish personal agenda should the situation warrant, reminds students to be kind to self and others in the face of difficulty, etc. (**acceptance, letting go**).)

The teacher is able to communicate their confidence and trust in mindfulness, even in the face of doubt, scepticism or resistance in the group.

Domain 4: Guiding mindfulness practices

- The appropriate schools-based MT in schools practices are taught in ways that children can understand and use them
- Practices are guided in the way teachers were trained to guide practices for this age group.
- Practices are guided from the experience of the teacher participating in practice with the group but maintaining appropriate visual contact as the group requires.
- The teacher moves around the classroom skilfully when required, e.g. to gently wake up a snoring pupil, or to move closer towards a giggling or misbehaving clutch of pupils.
- Teachers evidence good judgment in knowing how to manage pupils' sleepiness/wakefulness. This includes knowing the pupils and how to manage posture in terms of wakefulness/sleepiness. It may sometimes be appropriate for pupils to be encouraged to have their heads stay up as they practice and equally it may sometimes be appropriate when exhaustion prevails to allow them to rest their heads on their desks, and be allowed to sleep.

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

- Teacher demonstrates understanding of the curriculum and is able to relay this through the curriculum
- Language, examples, and activities are **clear, accessible and developmentally appropriate** to the groups (e.g. practices and/or lessons are shortened for younger or special needs groups; case studies or examples are tailored to the characteristics of the group, etc.). Teacher knows how to contextualise and make relevant any PowerPoint images, words or concepts which the class may not immediately understand or connect with.
- Teacher does not introduce extraneous activity, but may show initiative in bringing the curriculum to life in line with its aims and intentions through examples or activities.
- The teacher uses any aides (e.g., PowerPoint, video and props) skilfully such that they support the teaching rather than lead it. Whenever possible, general learning is 'drawn out' of pupils rather than 'telling' them. However, there are passages in the lessons that are more didactic, particularly when introducing a new idea.
- Uses *open-ended* rather than *closed-ended prompts* to invite exploration.
- Answers questions directly and clearly without going off course.

Domain 6: Holding the group learning environment

- The teacher is aware of necessary/relevant information about individuals' needs in this group to be sure that they are able to respond to the group in skilful ways.

- The teacher is aware of the setting's safeguarding procedures and uses those appropriately, as necessary. For example, the teacher might find ways of directing a pupil to other sources of help within the school if appropriate.
- Classroom management appropriately supports delivery of the mindfulness training. Strategies to engage and support individuals to participate as fully as possible are used where these complement the approach of the mindfulness lessons. For example, the teacher is able to adapt his/her teaching style in whichever way is required to 'hold' the group. Sometimes this may be gentle, patient and receptive (the 'guide on the side' mode); at other times it may be entertaining, even eccentric, and faster-paced (the 'sage on the stage' mode); at other times the teacher may have to shift into a stricter and more authoritative mode to 'hold' a misbehaving class, so that mindfulness training is feasible, and then know how to shift back into a more classical mindfulness teacher mode without losing balance.
- Teacher facilitates a **safe** and effective learning environment by establishing and maintaining group guidelines and includes students in their creation when possible (e.g. teacher reminds students of the guidelines when appropriate, offers positive praise for adherence to these and addresses any behavioural issues appropriately; teacher encourages students to explore a range of experiences –both pleasant and unpleasant- to cultivate an environment where it is safe to explore. etc.).
- The teacher transitions well between different phases of a lesson (e.g. from a more didactic phase, into a video clip, into a practice, out of the practice into pair work etc.). This includes the ability to orchestrate difficult whole class transitions quickly and smoothly (e.g. in Lesson 3 getting all the pupils out of their chairs and onto the floor, or getting them up and standing in a circle in Lesson 7 if using 'shock ball').
- Teacher demonstrates the ability to deal effectively with **challenging students**, including those who dominate the discussion, are combative, or present perspectives that undermine the program (e.g. teacher reminds students of the group guidelines; allows students to 'opt out' of practice while respecting others; avoids defensiveness or emotional reactivity in the face of student challenges; displays genuine curiosity about experiences of students regardless of preference, appeals to individual student's interests or needs, considers what is a helpful seating plan for pupils, possibly separating friends or ensuring a pupil causing disruption is not front and centre etc.).
- Teacher uses discipline skilfully when required. S/he does so in a way which is in line with the school's disciplinary procedures and child safeguarding policies. Once discipline is used, the teacher is able to move on with the lesson without being too 'thrown' by the previous, necessary intervention.
- Teacher demonstrates the ability to deal effectively (or skilfully) with **unmotivated students**, including those who appear uninterested, detached or distracted during the class activities and practices (e.g. teacher remembers to look around the room and make eye contact with all students; avoids calling on a few students when seeking responses; uses boredom or lack of interest as some of the examples, when appropriate, of the range of possible experience; includes short segments of small group or dyadic discussion when appropriate; avoids defensiveness or emotional reactivity in the face of student disengagement; displays genuine curiosity about experiences of students regardless of preference, etc.). Teacher is happy to accept and allow a degree of disengagement from some students without becoming defensive.

- Teacher maintains sense of humour and perspective throughout. If the pupils are not in the mood and everything s/he has tried to get them into the mood for practice has failed, s/he accepts this, tears up the lesson plan and salvages what s/he can.
- Teacher maintains a focus on **group process** while attending to the needs of the individual students (e.g. teacher is responsive to individual students' comments and questions but skillfully avoids allowing any student to monopolise the discussion; teacher encourages all students to participate and makes eye contact with all students, etc.).

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Assessing mindfulness-based teacher competence

Teacher:

Date of session and session number:

Assessor:

Date of Assessment:

() Video recording

() Live Observation

MINDFULNESS-BASED INTERVENTIONS: TEACHING ASSESSMENT CRITERIA – SUMMARY SHEET							
Domain	Key features (use the following page to offer qualitative feedback)	Incompetent 1	Beginner 2	Advanced Beginner 3	Competent 4	Proficient 5	Advanced 6
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						
Relational skills	Authenticity and potency Connection and acceptance Compassion and warmth Curiosity and respect Mutuality						
Embodiment of mindfulness	Present moment focus Present moment responsiveness Calm and alertness Attitudinal foundations Person of the teacher						
Guiding mindfulness practices	Language – precise and spacious Key learning for each practice available Elements to consider when guiding						
Conveying course themes through interactive inquiry and didactic teaching	Experiential focus Layers within the inquiry process Teaching skills/ conveying learning Fluency						
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. Embodiment of mindfulness		
4. Guiding mindfulness practices		
5. Conveying course themes through interactive inquiry and didactic teaching		
6. Holding the group learning environment		