

**The Bangor, Exeter & Oxford**  
**Mindfulness-Based Interventions**  
**Teaching Assessment Criteria**  
**(MBI-TAC)**

*for assessing the competence and adherence of mindfulness-based class-based teaching*

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## **Introduction**

These assessment criteria are intended to enable the teaching of Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) to be assessed for adherence and competence. The MBI-TAC has been developed since 2008 years 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. This work draws particularly on the lineage of teaching from the MBSR tradition (e.g. Kabat-Zinn, 1990) which has developed and evolved into many diverse forms of mindfulness-based interventions.

## **The background and intention of the Teaching Assessment Criteria**

The criteria have been developed to respond to the range of contexts in which the competence of a mindfulness teacher is a central question. This includes training programmes and supervision during which the criteria are used as a developmental tool to offer clear feedback to trainees and pointers for development; also research programmes and module assessments in which consistent, reliable and valid assessment of competence is required. One cannot expose oneself to the rigour of being assessed for competence without experiencing some vulnerability, so this work asks for deep sensitivity and respect from all of us involved in it. In all contexts nurturing the development of trainees is the core issue of concern and we strongly recommend that assessments are carried out with mindful awareness of the assessment process and are accompanied by qualitative feedback and sensitive and skilful guidance.

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 three Master's programmes offering mindfulness-based teacher training represented by the authors (Bangor, Exeter and Oxford) all include assessment of teaching competence within their trainings. It was clear that a robust methodology was required that enabled consistency and reliability both within the training team and nationally and established a level of expected competence which represents readiness to practice in the UK context.

Researchers also need tools to establish that mindfulness-based courses are being taught competently, especially in efficacy and effectiveness research. Several of our research trials have already made use of the MBI-TAC to ensure the integrity of the mindfulness interventions. Process outcome research using criteria such as this can begin to ask key questions like "Is mindfulness-based teacher competence essential to delivering good outcomes?" and "Which domains of mindfulness-based teacher competence best predict outcomes?"

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, there were a number of challenges. 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.

Discriminations about competence will always have an element of subjectivity to them. Our intention is to create a system which supports the process of forming these judgments and brings some consistency and transparency to the process.

In the transition from early vision of an approach or research on it to mainstream application there is commonly slippage from the core model which can dilute its 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.

## The structure of the Teaching Assessment Criteria

The 6 domains of competence within the MBI-TAC:

Domain 1: Coverage, pacing and organisation of session curriculum  
Domain 2: Relational skills  
Domain 3: Embodiment of mindfulness  
Domain 4: Guiding mindfulness practices  
Domain 5: Conveying course themes through interactive inquiry and didactic teaching  
Domain 6: Holding of group learning environment

Each domain comprises a number of 'key features' which describe its main aspects. These are the important features that need to be considered when scoring each domain. When assessing the domain, first identify whether the features are present; then consider whether the teacher should be regarded as competent with the features. 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' 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 absolute assessment criteria.

Each domain has a one page descriptor which introduces the domain, summarises the key features within the domain and presents a table of examples of observations of teaching at the range of competence levels. Following this there is more detailed guidance of the domain and the characteristics of the features within it.

### **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. Certainly some domains are more substantial / multi-faceted and therefore 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 therefore 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 and to be 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 accommodate some variation. It is important therefore that assessors bring an open mind to the process of viewing and judging the teaching of others, recognising and setting aside personal bias and preference. We set out a proposed way of rating tapes (below) that supports assessors in using 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 which can support consistent assessment of teacher competence, but (given that the assessor does not have access to the entire picture) do not offer a complete picture of the teacher's capacity and competence. The assessor can only base assessments on *observations* of the 'person' 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 their awareness of inner process. Notably, there are some key areas that cannot be assessed via direct observation of teaching. A prior requisite of the assessment process is ensuring that a basis of good practice for mindfulness-based teaching is in place. The following guidance for good practice has been drawn up and agreed by the UK Mindfulness Trainers' Network (see [mindfulnessteachersuk.org.uk](http://mindfulnessteachersuk.org.uk), 2012).

Another challenge in discerning and labelling the component parts of a complex process is that it can introduce a sense of rigidity – even though a significant component part is evidence of flexibility, responsiveness and sensitivity of the teacher to present moment experience. We encourage the assessor to shift attention regularly from close-up observation of detail to wider-angle attention on the feel of the whole, to guard against moving into overly rigid interpretation.

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 which 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 to watch recordings of one's own teaching and to use this time as an opportunity to reflect on the elements which 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 a teacher's 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 a teacher's 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 recording of the teaching of a whole 8-session course to enable sampling of the teacher's practice.

## **Principles to bear in mind when using the assessment criteria**

In assessing competence using these criteria, assessors should bear a number of principles in mind:

- The scaling assumes that competences develop over time, moving towards greater competence 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 8-week course; a whole session; or the entire 8-week course). Not all domains of competence would be expected to be observable if the unit of assessment is a component of the 8-week course.
- *Observable data* should be used as evidence to make assessments. If there are contextual reasons that have compromised the demonstration of competence it is important that the assessor is informed of this so these 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 DVD).

- 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.
- 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.
- The domains describe processes which are at play throughout the teaching. At any one moment several domains will be in action. For example, during the teacher-led dialogue which 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 with each other making it challenging to discriminate what aspect of the teaching to assess within each domain. As far as is possible, it is important that the assessor is clear within which domains the various elements of the teaching process are assessed. Refer to the key features when making these discriminations. Additional guidance for discriminating is given as ‘NBs’ under the features within each domain.

## **Levels of competence**

The Dreyfus Scale of Competence (Dreyfus, 1986) underpins the competence descriptions (see Table 1). In the original Dreyfus scale there are five levels, to this the further level of 'incompetence' is added here; 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 draws on work evaluating competence of psychological practitioners by Sharpless & Barber (2009).

The levels within the assessment criteria represent the range of teaching competence which is realistically expected in mindfulness-based teaching practice in the UK. Each level represents a developmental stage – it is natural for teachers to move through them 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 to their teaching practice. In practice any one teacher is unlikely to demonstrate consistent levels of competence – some variability between adjacent levels is normal.

Discriminating which level the teaching falls 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 under the summary for each domain are intended to support these discriminations.

**Table 1: Levels of Mindfulness-Based Teaching Competence  
(adapted from the Dreyfus Scale of Competence, 1986)**

Generic definition of overall competence level	Competence band	Numerical band
Key features are not demonstrated. The teacher makes consistent errors and displays poor and unacceptable teaching, leading to likely or actual negative therapeutic consequences. No real evidence that the teacher has grasped the fundamentals of the MBI teaching process.	<b>Incompetent</b> <i>Absence of key features, or highly inappropriate performance</i>	<b>1</b>
At least one key feature present in most domains, but numerous substantive problems and overall lack of consistency require considerable further development.	<b>Beginner</b> <i>Aspects of competence demonstrated but significant problems evident</i>	<b>2</b>
At least two key features at a competent level in most domains, but one or more major problems and/or significant inconsistencies that require further development. Teachers adequately take care of participants' emotional and physical safety. Teacher would at a very basic level be considered 'fit for practice' as co-teachers / under supervision – the participants would not be harmed and are likely to have opportunities for learning.	<b>Advanced Beginner</b> <i>Evidence of some competence, but numerous problems and lack of consistency</i>	<b>3</b>
Most key features are present in all domains, with possibly some good features, but a number of problems and/or some inconsistencies are present. Teacher demonstrates a workable level of competence and they are clearly 'fit for practice'.	<b>Competent</b> <i>Competent, with some problems and/or inconsistencies</i>	<b>4</b>
All key features are present in all domains, with very few and very minor inconsistencies and evidence of good ability and skill. The teacher is able consistently to demonstrate these skills over the range of aspects to MBI teaching.	<b>Proficient</b> <i>Sustained competence demonstrated with few or minor problems and/or inconsistencies</i>	<b>5</b>
Expected key features are present with evidence of considerable ability. The teaching is particularly inspirational and excellent. The teacher no longer uses rules, guidelines or maxims. He/she 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).	<b>Advanced</b> <i>Excellent teaching practice, or very good even in the face of participant difficulties</i>	<b>6</b>

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

The criteria extends 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 p.42) mark with an 'X' on 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 DVD recordings (it is not recommended to use the MBI-TAC from audio recordings which 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 – place yourself in the position of participant, including participating in mindfulness practices.
2. During this first viewing have the scoring sheet near to hand as an aide memoire to the domains and key features. If it is helpful make notes under relevant sections to denote 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 an experiential level.
3. At the end of the teaching, take a mindful pause and settle into your direct experience. From this place make a global assessment of the teacher’s competence level using the guide on Page 7.
4. Now take time to consider each individual domain and the 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 in making your rating and make an assessment accordingly. 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.
5. 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 to challenge or support your global or detailed assessments prior to arriving at a final decision. It is at this point that collaboration with a colleague in making assessments is valuable.

The assessments yield a multi-dimensional profile of scores. 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 therapy trial or pass an assessed training 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 of the assessment context. Local versions of the summary assessment sheet can be



developed which integrate appropriate marking grades and allow for an overall average score to be realised.

Where inconsistency of competence is demonstrated within a domain (e.g. proficient examples of guiding practice in early part of session and beginner level example demonstrated at end of session), the average of these should be taken for the overall score with 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 therapeutic skills in applying the methods within the context of the difficulties. A central theme of mindfulness-based interventions is learning to be with and work with difficulty, therefore credit should be given for demonstrations of appropriate skilful interventions and interactions when working with challenge and difficulty.

### **Training to use the MBI:TAC**

Assessors should themselves be at the level of 'proficient' mindfulness-based teachers and should have received training in the use of these assessment criteria (contact the authors for details of training opportunities). They were developed with an awareness of both the potential and the risks of applying such methods to assessing something as complex and multidimensional as teaching mindfulness-based interventions. It is important that users of the criteria also bring these understandings to the process. Furthermore, as with any new tool it takes some time to become familiar with the contents, structure and process of the MBI-TAC, to reach a common understanding of what the domains mean, and to discern the competence level of the teaching. Experience indicates that reliability of assessments increases as the assessor becomes familiar with the criteria and with the process of using it to assess competence. It has been found very helpful for new users to co-assess with more experienced assessors, discussing the process and reaching a consensus. We suggest that prior to using the criteria the user participates in the training process developed by the authors; this familiarises the user with the process, its development and background, and enables assessment results to be compared with benchmarked assessments. 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.

## Domain 1: Coverage, pacing and organisation of session curriculum

**Overview:** 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. The teacher is well organised with relevant course materials and teaching aids readily available and the room appropriately prepared for the group. The session is well 'time managed' in relation to the curriculum. The session is 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:

- (i) adherence to the form of the programme and coverage of themes and curriculum content
- (ii) responsiveness and flexibility in adhering to session curriculum
- (iii) appropriateness of the themes and content (to stage of programme and to the participants)
- (iv) level of organisation of teacher, room and materials
- (v) the degree to which the session flows and is appropriately paced

### N.B.

- Assessors must themselves have teaching experience of the particular MBI that is under review.
- 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.

	Examples
Incompetent	Curriculum not covered or highly inappropriate curriculum. No attempt made to structure session time. Session seemed aimless or overly rigid.
Beginner	Curriculum inappropriate at times e.g. curriculum choices departed from the usual content with no clear rationale for this; or session had some direction, but the teacher had significant problems with pacing or time management (e.g., too slowly paced, too rapidly paced, time boundaries not adhered to); or lack of organisation; or considerable inconsistency in covering curriculum themes.
Advanced Beginner	At least two key features at a competent level but some difficulty clearly evident or most key features evident but with considerable inconsistency: e.g. some skill in maintaining the form of the programme or covering the curriculum shown, but significant curriculum element missing or curriculum element which is not part of session introduced without clear rationale, or some problems with managing time. Content of curriculum themes mostly appropriate but with some problems.
Competent	Most key features present but with some inconsistency e.g. appropriate curriculum moderately well covered; overly focused on the individual, leading to somewhat compromised curriculum; teacher introducing areas of discussion which are inappropriate for group stage; teacher used time effectively by tactfully limiting peripheral and unproductive discussion and/or by pacing the session as was appropriate for the group, content of curriculum themes appropriate.
Proficient	All key features present. Appropriate curriculum and well covered. Appropriate form of programme clearly evidenced 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 of curriculum highly appropriate.
Advanced	Excellent coverage of curriculum with high degree of flexibility, responsiveness, spaciousness and appropriate pacing while simultaneously thoroughly addressing the key curriculum themes for the session.

## **Domain 1: Coverage, pacing and organisation of session curriculum – guidance notes**

### *(i) 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 and 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 group, and with the overarching intentions of the session. The assessor requires contextual information to clarify these, and also rationales for curriculum content that departs from the usual MBSR or MBCT curriculum.

Curriculum guides for MBSR and MBCT courses are available elsewhere and are not reproduced here (see Blacker et al., 2009, and Segal et al., 2002b in the Reference List at end). The principles to bear in mind here are that MBSR courses usually aim to highlight general patterns that create human suffering, while MBCT courses also aim 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?

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 be encouraging participants to deliberately ‘turn towards’ difficult experience.

### *(ii) responsiveness and flexibility in adhering to session curriculum*

Mindfulness-based teaching requires that time is given to exploring important issues with sensitivity and simultaneously that time is used in an intentional and focused way. Effective coverage and pacing of the session curriculum offers an opportunity to embody the possibility of balancing working responsively with the present moment whilst 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, 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 is carefully planned and particular. 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 or 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).

*(iii) appropriateness of the themes and content (to stage of programme and to the participants)*

This feature assesses the teacher's ability to recognise participants' needs and adapt the session accordingly. The pacing of the material should always be accommodated 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 change drastically in accordance with the needs of the situation.

*(iv) level of organisation of teacher, room and materials*

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; 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.)

*(v) the degree to which the session flows and is appropriately paced*

Was there any time during the session when the session moved too slowly or quickly? Did the session flow well overall? Did the participants or the teacher appear rushed? 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.

Was the teacher able to work skilfully with digressions? The teacher may appropriately politely interrupt peripheral discussion and direct participants back to the agenda. The session should move through discrete phases which 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

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 – mindfulness practice engages us in a process of developing 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 during the MBI programme. Mindfulness is the awareness which 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:**

- (i) *authenticity and potency – relating in a way which seems genuine, honest and confident*
- (ii) *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*
- (iii) *compassion and warmth – conveying a deep awareness, sensitivity, appreciation and openness to participants’ experience*
- (iv) *curiosity and respect - conveying genuine interest in each participant and his/her experience whilst respecting each participants’ vulnerabilities, boundaries and need for privacy*
- (v) *mutuality – engaging with the participants in a mutual collaborative working relationship*

**N.B.** – The relational aspect to mindfulness teaching is particularly related to Domain 3 Embodiment of mindfulness. The intention in Domain 2 is to encompass those parts of the process which rely on the interpersonal connection between participant and teacher.

	<b>Examples</b>
Incompetent	Teacher has poor relational and interpersonal skills – they consistently ‘miss the point’ of what participants are communicating. Aspects of the interpersonal process are destructive.
Beginner	At least one key feature adequate or aspects of skill demonstrated in some of the key features but with significant levels of inconsistency; e.g. lack of genuineness, or compassion and warmth, or empathy, or a sense of disconnection.
Advanced Beginner	At least two key features competent e.g. some aspects of relational skills are adequate and participants’ safety is not compromised or there are no aspects of the relational process which are destructive to participants; or teacher’s style at times impedes his/her ability to establish a relationship which enables engaged exploration (e.g. lack of connection, responsiveness, curiosity not conveyed, hesitant style, intellectualisation, judgemental tone)
Competent	Teacher relates in an acceptable way with most key features present. Effective working relationships are generally formed with participants. Mostly the teacher’s relational style facilitates participants in feeling at ease, accepted and appreciated. Some minor problems or inconsistencies.
Proficient	All key features present with only a few minor inconsistencies. Teacher demonstrates very good relational skills with all features demonstrated and few minor inconsistencies. Teacher is strongly attuned to participants, the interactions are sensitive and responsive and respectful. The teacher creates a relational process which allows participants to deeply engage with their learning.
Advanced	The teacher demonstrates excellent relational effectiveness with a keen grasp of the participant’s world; consistently good levels of collaboration, compassion, openness, warmth, acceptance and responsiveness to participants.

## Domain 2: Relational skills – guidance notes

- (i) *authenticity and potency – relating in a way which seems genuine, honest and confident*

The teacher is honest and open in their relationships with participants. They relate in a way which is naturally aligned with how they are as a person. One can sense that 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 – 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. In a large part this sense of authenticity is conveyed by the teacher being thoroughly at home within the teaching – it is clear that the teacher 'knows' what s/he is teaching from deep personal experience. This leads to potency and confidence in responding to the process and to participants. This confidence is different from knowing the answers to things – but is a confidence in the process of the teaching – a sense of being comfortable with not knowing what will happen next, but bringing to it an open, curious attitude of 'lets explore this together and see where it takes us'.

- (ii) *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*

This feature refers to the ability of the teacher to 'tune' into or empathise with what the participant is conveying. The 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. Empathy concerns the teacher's ability to make the participant aware that their difficulties are recognised and understood. The teacher accurately summarises both the *content* of what participants express and its *emotional tone*. The teacher demonstrates genuine interest in the participant's 'internal reality' and communicates (through appropriate verbal and non-verbal responses) enough understanding of this to help the participant feel understood. The teacher is completely willing to 'meet' each individual where they are in this moment, to respond in an attuned way to this and to explore and honour their experience just as it is. There is a clear movement from connecting with the individual, to attending to participants' experience and being responsive to it.

In practice during conversations with participants in the class, the teacher will be checking with them the accuracy of their understanding – e.g. 'So let me check I am hearing you correctly....'; 'So you noticed.....'

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

- (iii) *compassion and warmth – conveying a deep awareness, sensitivity, appreciation and openness to participants' experience*

Whilst empathy is the sense of 'feeling with' another being; compassion is the movement of mind which seeks to alleviate the 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 recognize and appreciate individual sovereignty. Unlike sympathy or pity, it boosts the other's self-esteem and cultivates human dignity. There is thus the recognition of the human-ness of experience – 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 – my ability to be compassionate and giving does not make me better than the recipient. Compassion strengthens our ability to remain human and to be open to the experiences of others. Compassion particularly finds expression when painful experience is present. Warmth is an aspect of compassion – a warm person conveys to the other a sense of feeling appreciated, respected and accepted.

*(iv) Curiosity and respect - conveying genuine interest in each participant and his/her experience whilst respecting each participants' vulnerabilities, boundaries and need for privacy*

The relational style engages the participant in an active exploration of their own experience rather than relying on the expertise of the teacher. The teacher brings a gentle but alive curiosity to the explorations which unfold in the session. The teacher has a strong degree of responsibility to create the particular conditions for this learning to take place, but beyond this ensures that the participant takes responsibility for their own learning process. The intention is to empower the participant to come to know that they are their own experts – they already have a 'fund of relevant experience and skills' (Segal et al., 2002, p.92). 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 (Crane, 2009). 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 the participant 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 the participant's boundaries and vulnerabilities as they are in this moment. In practice, the teacher will ask permission of the participant 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, and also the particular boundaries and requirements of the participant population being taught.

*(v) 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 which *everyone* can relate to. There is therefore no way in which the teacher separates 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 a good therapeutic relationship.



### Domain 3: Embodiment of mindfulness

**Overview:** Mindfulness practice permeates the teacher and is expressed through two interconnected aspects to embodiment – ‘present moment focus’, and bringing the attitudinal foundations of mindfulness to moment by moment experience. 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:**

- (i) *Present moment focus - expressed through behaviour and verbal and non verbal communication*
- (ii) *Present moment responsiveness - to internal and external experience*
- (iii) *Calm & vitality - simultaneously conveying steadiness, ease, non-reactivity, and alertness*
- (iv) *Attitudinal foundations: - conveying mindfulness practice through the teacher's way of being*
- (v) *Person of the teacher – the learning is conveyed through the teacher's way of being*

**N.B.** – 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 of group learning environment.

	<b>Examples</b>
Incompetent	Embodiment not conveyed – e.g. consistent lack of present moment focus. Attitudinal qualities are not in evidence.
Beginner	At least one key feature adequate. Lack of consistent present moment focus, or teacher not calm, at ease and alert, or attitudinal qualities often not clearly in evidence e.g. teacher tends to default to seeing and working with things through their critical thinking and problem solving mind, or works in a goal orientated way; lack of spirit of exploration.
Advanced Beginner	Several key features at competent level. Teacher does evidence embodiment of several principles of mindfulness practice within the teaching process but there is lack of consistency, or teacher demonstrates some skilful present moment internal and external connectedness but this is not sustained throughout.
Competent	Most key features are present with an acceptable level of skill and some minor inconsistency; teacher generally demonstrates an ability to communicate the attitudinal qualities of mindfulness practice through their ‘way of being’ in the areas of language, bodily expression and behaviour and is mostly present moment focused.
Proficient	All key features are present with a good level of skill – sustained levels of present moment focus through the teaching and demonstration of the range of attitudinal qualities of mindfulness throughout with very minor inconsistencies.
Advanced	Teacher demonstrates exceptionally high levels of awareness of and responsiveness to the present moment throughout the teaching process, or works with high levels of internal and external connectedness. Attitudinal qualities of mindfulness present in a particularly inspiring way.

### Domain 3: Embodiment of mindfulness – guidance notes

A critical dimension of the teaching process is the way in which the teacher communicates authenticity through sustaining connection to their own personal mindfulness practice whilst teaching. A teacher who is *embodying* mindfulness has taken in, at a level which goes deeper than conceptual understanding, what it means to directly connect with and relate to experience and the world through awareness of the present moment and with acceptance. It is through this that the teacher learns to be deeply present with participants and their difficulties without moving in to fix things; to be 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 which resonates with meaning for the participants in the group.

As this process develops the teacher becomes able to operate within this being mode of 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 openness to this 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 (Crane, 2008).

(i) *expression of present moment focus and attitudinal foundations of mindfulness practice through behaviour and verbal and non-verbal communication*

The teacher offers a demonstration of present moment focus and the seven attitudinal foundations to mindfulness practice so 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. their posture, physical groundedness and steadiness, physical sense of ease, calm and alertness, steadiness, rhythm and pitch of voice tone, etc.

(ii) *conveying present moment responsiveness to internal and external experience*

Key feature (ii) relates to the teacher's connection and responsiveness to their own personal experience during teaching.

All other aspects of present moment focus are assessed as they arise within the other domains – i.e.:

- **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 of group learning environment)
- **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 the teacher, incorporating mindful awareness of their process while teaching offers a way to bring a present moment awareness of all 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 teacher’s 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 – allowing for truly authentic responsiveness.

In practice this process is evidenced by a *relaxed calmness, together with alertness, aliveness and vitality shown through language, bodily expression and behaviour*. The teacher’s sensitivity to personal direct experience influences their choices within the group - e.g. through attuning to an individual during mindful dialogue; through the use of breathing spaces to open participants to difficulty arising within the group; through appropriate sharing of ‘in the moment’ personal direct experience. The teacher embodies a sense of ‘surrender’ to the moment and to what is needed now.

Through this ‘way of being’ there is a clear demonstration to the group of ‘mindfulness in action’ – a lived example of the essence of mindfulness practice and principles. The teacher operates predominantly in ‘being’ rather than ‘doing’ mode. The teacher is immersed in the process.

The teacher will use their 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.

(iii) *simultaneously conveying steadiness, calm, ease, non-reactivity, and alertness and vitality*

Mindfulness training develops the capacity to reside with a steady mind which is simultaneously alert and vital. The practitioner develops the finely tuned attention of a cat, forever watchful and patient, as it sits in front of a mouse hole, waiting for its prey to emerge. In this way there is a greater chance that the inevitable inner reactivity which emerges in the form of constellations of thoughts, emotions and body sensations are seen as they arise. A teacher who has this way of being built into him/her through a deep and sustained 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.

- (iv) *conveying the attitudinal foundations of mindfulness practice – non-judging, patience, beginner's mind, trust, non-striving, acceptance, and letting go – through the teacher's way of being*

The attitudinal qualities that are inherent within the programme (non-judging, patience, beginner's mind, trust, non-striving, acceptance, and letting go) are taught through embodied process throughout the teaching of mindfulness-based courses, as well as sometimes being conveyed verbally through interactive teaching (assessed in Domain 5). Participants are learning to learn in new ways through the modelling offered by the teacher of this way of being with experience. The attitudinal foundations (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, Ch.2) to mindfulness practice which are being conveyed in this process are laid out below:

- **Non-judging** – the teacher supports participants to open to an awareness of the stream of our inner and outer experience just as it is, without adding interpretation or judgement – but in a way which enables openness to seeing the internal process of automatically judging it and reacting to it. The teacher and participant are developing a stance of ‘impartial witness’ to experience. The teacher brings an intention not to judge their own personal 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.
- **Beginner’s mind** – the teacher communicates a willingness to ‘suspend’ judgement and approaches experience with a fresh interest and curiosity. So that rather than seeing things through a fog of preconceptions there is the possibility of bringing clarity and vitality to experience. The teacher supports participants to develop a perspective on our experience that is not based on our history.
- **Trust** – conveying ‘in the moment’ (rather than focused on outcome) trust and confidence in the process of bringing mindful attention to experience. The teacher communicates a faith 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.
- **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 any goal, but rather is intending to uncover an awareness of the actuality of experience, and a willingness to let it be the way it is. The process of mindfulness offers us all the opportunity to step aside from our usual 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.
- **Letting go** – 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 entangled in the content of it. The mindfulness-based teaching process puts a particular emphasis on coming to know our conditioned tendency to hold onto the pleasant, ignore the neutral, and reject the unpleasant, and to see the ways in which this perpetuates our difficulties. The teacher works with letting go of expectations and of needing to guide the process towards a particular outcome, having no agenda other than exploring and understanding the actuality of participants' experience in each moment

In addition to these qualities, Kabat-Zinn (1990) also describes the energy and motivation that is brought to mindfulness practice as 'commitment, self discipline and intentionality' – the development of perseverance and resolve to stay with the process of investigation of personal experience. Intentionality is a key area that the teacher is embodying within the teaching process.

**Intentionality:** In order to set the stage for this particular form of experiential learning, a certain sort of intention and purpose needs to be cultivated. The teacher conveys this through seamless cultivation of mindful awareness within the session. The combination of working in non-striving ways whilst also being focused, clear and directional forms a paradox which 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, p.92). 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'); and through the teacher giving expression to the qualities of 'non-striving' alongside 'firm intention' in their entire way of being during the teaching (Crane, 2009).

(v) *person of the teacher – the learning is conveyed through the way of being of the teacher*

'Being the person whose story you have lived' (p.92, McCown et al., 2010). The teacher communicates through their way of being the essence of the MBCT learning process. How this happens is as individual as the person themselves. It includes a capacity to respond intuitively to the moment, to be with difficulty and to appropriately bring personal experience to the meeting with participants.

### **Domain 4: Guiding mindfulness practices**

**Overview:** The teacher offers 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 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). The guidance suggests the attitudes to bring to self and experience throughout the practice. The practice balances spaciousness with precision. Skilful use of language is key to conveying all this.

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

*(i) language is clear, precise, accurate and accessible whilst conveying spaciousness*

*(ii) the teacher guides the practice in a way which makes the key learning for each practice available to participants (see guidance notes below for checklists)*

*(iii) the particular elements to consider when guiding each practice are appropriately presented (see guidance notes below for checklists)*

**N.B.** – Embodiment of mindfulness is a crucial underpinning to practice guidance, and should be assessed under Domain 3 Embodiment of mindfulness.

	<b>Examples</b>
Incompetent	Guidance is inaccurate and unclear. Key feature(s) of practice are not present.
Beginner	Aspects of at least one key feature at an adequate level. Some attempts to offer guidance in an appropriate way, but significant errors, gaps and inconsistencies.
Advanced Beginner	At least two key features at a competent level but with significant inconsistencies e.g. some guidance offered clearly, accurately and appropriately but language conveys a sense of striving for results. Adequate care taken of participants' emotional and physical safety.
Competent	Most key features present at a competent level with some inconsistency e.g. guidance is generally clear and accurate with most key features present. Safety well attended to, but slight lack of precision, sense of spaciousness not conveyed, or language not always invitational.
Proficient	All key features present with only minor inconsistencies e.g. practice guidance is good, conveys both precision and spaciousness, elements to consider in guiding are clearly integrated, key learning for practice is available to participant through the guidance.
Advanced	Exceptionally skilful guidance with all features consistently present with very good level of skill. Safety well attended to with creative and inspiring guidance on working with physical and emotional 'edges' and boundaries.

## Domain 4: Guiding mindfulness practices – guidance notes

Mindfulness practice guiding offers an opportunity to integrate teaching on the cultivation of mindfulness, and space for participants to experience and experiment with the process for themselves. Given the subtlety of the messages being conveyed and the paradox inherent within these, great delicateness and sensitivity is needed when guiding. The teacher should demonstrate familiarity with the key intentions of mindfulness practice generally and also the specific intentions of each practice (see below for summary of these).

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

(i) *language is clear, precise, accurate and accessible whilst conveying spaciousness*

General points:

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

### All practices need to incorporate 3 layers of guidance:

1. instructions on where to place attention (described below in relation to each practice)

*This needs to be integrated and interspersed with guidance on:*

2. working with mind wandering
3. the attitudes to cultivate while doing the practice

### Guidance on where to place attention (see practice specific issues below)

Requirement for accuracy and precision – i.e. clear articulation of what the participant is specifically being invited to do

### Offering guidance on working with mind wandering:

-Being clear that mind wandering is part of the process; i.e. our intention is not to keep the attention one pointedly on for example the breath 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. This way is to:

- o acknowledge that the attention has wandered (some teachers suggest noting where the attention has gone before returning)



o bring attention back to the object of awareness with an emphasis on *kindness* and gentleness but also with firmness

o do this again and again with acceptance and without judgement

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

### **Offering guidance on the attitudinal qualities to cultivate:**

Be attentive to the presence/absence 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 simply bringing awareness to the experience of this".
- avoiding language which might feed into a sense of striving – words such as 'trying', 'working', 'seeing if you can...' can be unhelpful
- spaciousness – balancing silence with guidance, and using language economically
- using 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

The inclusion of appropriate attitudes in practice guidance is assessed in this Domain, while the teacher's own conveying of the attitudinal foundations through their way of being is assessed in Domain 3 Embodiment of mindfulness.

Guidance for features:

- (ii) *the teacher guides the practice in a way which makes the key learning for each practice available to participants*
- (iii) *the particular elements to consider when guiding each practice are appropriately present*

These are offered below in relation to each meditation practice.

### **Raisin practice**

**Raisin practice – key learning (feature ii):**

- 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 (feature iii):**

- Hygiene considerations – using a spoon, clean bowl, pouring out raisins in front of participants, kitchen paper to hand, may suggest in orientation that participants wash hands for eating meditation before class;
- Offering option not to eat raisin – explore with other senses;
- Choosing to offer participants just one raisin - or two or three. Potential to guide the first one interactively as a group – inviting them to call out ‘feeling’ words which can give the flavour of what is being asked for here; the next one you can ask them to eat it in silence with you guiding and the next one in silence completely with no guidance (if only one, ask them to eat in silence with you guiding)
- Inviting letting go of knowing that this is a raisin and to see it ‘fresh’ as a child first encounters experience
- Consider emphasising the attitudes of curiosity, interest, exploration
- In the inquiry there are several areas that are useful to explore with participants:
  - 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 the 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
    - (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; slowing down even the most routine activities might transform them; 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; 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) the difference between eating this way and usual attitudes to eating; impulses around food are often unconscious, powerful and uncontrolled

**Body scan – key learning (feature ii):**

- Direct experiential knowing of physical sensations
- Learning to be intentional about how we pay attention
- Relating skilfully to the mind wandering when it occurs (acknowledging and bringing back) and to difficulties + guidance about how to handle difficulties (sleepiness, discomfort, etc.)
- 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 + taking attention to 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 (feature iii):**

- Start and end by bringing attention to the whole body
- Pay particular attention to detail of body sensations; give examples of words describing sensations – warm, cold, tingling, numbness, etc.
- Give participants the option to come back to the breath at any time to stabilise their attention – remind them of this during the practice
- Allow the absence of feeling particular or any sensations to be just as important as their presence
- Instruct to let go of the last body region before moving awareness to the next
- Be aware of exactly where and how teacher is asking participants to place their attention
- Vary instructions between both narrow angle, detailed awareness of a small part of the body, and wide 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 which invites participants to move into a direct ‘being with’ body sensations rather than looking at them from a distance
- Skilful guidance of awareness of breath within the body scan
- Balance guidance which gives the flavour of being with, allowing, and accepting alongside that giving a flavour of exploration, curiosity, aliveness, adventure

**Sitting meditation**

### **Sitting meditation – key learning (feature ii):**

- Anchoring to present moment through body sensations
- Dealing skilfully with mind-wandering
- Learning gentleness, encouraging curiosity, learning acceptance
- Mindfulness of ‘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, as 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 (feature iii):**

#### ***Posture***

Giving practical information on helpful posture using e.g. chair, stool, cushion. Supporting 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 mind’.

#### ***Breath***

Anchoring in the present moment: reconnecting with a specific aspect of experience in the here and now. Guidance on where in the body to pay attention to breath sensations. Avoidance 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 to place attention
- Offering clear guidance here on options for working with discomfort / pain / intensity whether it is of a physical or emotional origin.

#### ***Sounds***

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

#### ***Thoughts and emotions***

- Relating to thoughts similarly to how we relate to sounds – seeing their 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 the challenge
- Use the breath as an anchor when the mind becomes unsettled
- Expanding the attention to include emotions, naming these, seeing how they play out in body sensations

### **Mindfulness of the full range of experience – choiceless awareness**

- Being with and bringing an open attention to whatever is arising in each moment – 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 minute breathing space – key learning (feature ii):**

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

1. **Awareness** – Recognising and acknowledging all of one’s current experience (thoughts, emotions, sensations)
2. **Gathering** – bringing the attention to the sensations of the breath in a particular place in the body
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 minute breathing space – elements to consider in guiding (feature iii):**

**Guidance on posture** – communicate the effect of coming to an upright and dignified posture. If this is not possible (in using the additional 3MBS in difficult situations, for example) then inviting participants to make a first move of *becoming aware* of their posture is helpful

**Precision in communicating the 3 steps of the practice during guidance** – the instructions need to be carefully targeted towards what is intended

**Including instructions on mind wandering** and working with this

**Helping participants recognise and practice the three steps of the 3MBS**

**NB** – the 3MBS and other practices need to be accompanied by a teaching process which supports participants in practising at home and integrating 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 3MBS are cited below in italics:

- *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 3MBS as a natural first step – whenever things feel difficult or there is confusion; using the 3MBS 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*
- *Clarity in developing the application of the 3MBS through the 8 weeks*

**Mindful movement**

### **Mindful movement – key learning (feature ii):**

- Building on the foundation of the body scan in learning how we can bring awareness to and inhabit bodily experience/sensation
- Experiencing awareness of the body in motion, as it often is in life
- Relating to the body with friendliness; for some increasing enjoyment of the body's capacities
- Movements and postures offer an embodiment of life experiences and processes
- Seeing habitual tendencies played out
- Working with physical boundaries/intensity offers a parallel to working in similar ways with emotional experience; experiencing that 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 (feature iii):**

*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*

- i. Giving clear and precise guidance on ways of working with physical boundaries at the beginning of the practice
- ii. Interspersing the practice with reminders about working within safe limits for your body in this moment
- iii. Offering guidance in particular on:
  - a. Potential adaptations for postures as they are taught
  - b. 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
  - c. 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
- iv. Always encouraging participants to err on the side of caution
- v. Always encouraging participants to listen to the wisdom of their own body and allow this to override any guidance you may be giving
- vi. Reminding participants not to be competitive with themselves or others

#### ***Breath guidance***

Helpful guidance regarding the breath includes:

- i. Generally, guiding participants to breathe in as they form the intention to move and then to move with the out breath
  - ii. Encouraging participants to breath fully and freely in whatever way feels most natural as they move
  - iii. Guidance on relaxing into postures and breathing with or into regions of greatest intensity
- Ensuring that guidance is given in ways which invite detailed awareness of moment by moment experience***
- i. Giving plenty of space within the practice:
    - a. Dwell in the postures long enough to let go into them
    - b. Rest between postures to enable the effects of the movement to be sensed
  - ii. Encouraging participants to explore and discover the creative edge between exploring / investigating / discovering, and accepting / letting be / being with

**Overview:** This domain assesses the *process* through which the course themes are conveyed to participants. These are at times explicitly drawn out and underlined by the teacher and at other times emerge implicitly within the process. The domain includes inquiry, group dialogue, use of stories and poems, facilitating group exercises, orienting participants to session/course themes and didactic teaching.

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

- (i) *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*
- (ii) *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*
- (iii) *Conveying learning –through integrating material from outside the group with experience of participants*
- (iv) *Teaching skills – the learning is communicated through clear, participatory, playful, alive, responsive teaching process*
- (v) *Fluency – teacher conveys ease, familiarity with and confident knowledge of the material*

**N.B.** – 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 (not leading mindfulness practices)**

– This domain assesses the process through which the teacher conveys the teaching themes – the presence of the themes themselves are rated in Domain 1 Coverage, pacing and organisation of session curriculum

– Embodiment of mindfulness is a crucial underpinning to interactive teaching and should be assessed under Domain 3 Embodiment of mindfulness.

	<b>Examples</b>
Incompetent	Teaching process unclear and inconsistent with principles of mindfulness-based teaching, e.g. no attempt to elicit specific elements of direct experience; participants not engaged; teacher not familiar with material; reliance on didactic teaching, debate or persuasion.
Beginner	At least one key feature at an adequate level. Teaching process conveys some teaching themes but considerable inconsistency, e.g. teaching style dull and un-engaging.
Advanced Beginner	Several key features at a competent level – teaching process is adequate but basic with significant inconsistencies, e.g. lack of clarity in communicating themes; lack of familiarity with material; lack of relevancy of material to participants.
Competent	Most key features present at a competent level – teaching process generally conveys key teaching themes in an understandable and accessible manner. Teacher, for the most part, supports participants to investigate their experience through inquiry rather than through discussion, didactic teaching, or problem solving. Some inconsistencies or gaps – e.g. teacher not fully integrating direct experience of participants into the material.
Proficient	All key features present with good level of skill and only minor inconsistencies. e.g. teacher knows material well; participants’ direct experience thoroughly integrated into the teaching; good connection with participants; teaching is ‘alive’ and learning is obviously taking place.
Advanced	Highly skilful and inspiring teaching skills as evidenced by precision and sensitivity in drawing out elements of experiencing; working in an interactive and participatory way with the group to explore these; range of key teaching themes conveyed in a highly accessible and engaging manner and connected with the personal direct experience of participants and of the teacher when appropriate; teacher thoroughly ‘at home’ and familiar with the material from a range of angles; teaching feels ‘alive’ and highly engaging.

## **Domain 5: Conveying course themes through interactive inquiry and didactic teaching – guidance notes**

A large part of each session is taken up by interactive teaching processes – reviewing the experience of mindfulness practices during the session and at home (inquiry), 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 an embodiment of a potential way of being and working with experience beyond the programme. The teacher demonstrates skilful and creative use of a range of different methods of teaching, including the use of metaphor, poems and stories. 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.

- (i) *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 is predominantly based on an experiential focus and supports participants in reconnecting with their direct experience (with a particular emphasis on sensations in the body) and uses this experiential 'data' as a starting point for exploration and learning. When the dialogue moves into conceptualisations, the teacher quickly leads the participants back towards connection with immediate experience. Participants are given opportunities to become aware of and discriminate the different elements of direct experience – sensations, thoughts, feelings – both retrospectively tracking these as they arose in a mindfulness practice and tracking them now as they arise in the moment.

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

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



(ii) *exploring the different 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.*

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

One can think of the dialogue as having **three concentric circles and layers of inquiry** (see also Table 2 on p.33):

### **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, movement)
- How did it feel?
- Where were these occurring - specific location or through the whole body?
- Did the sensations change or were they constant?
- Emotions/feelings, and thoughts connected to them
- Thoughts about now, the past, the future?
- When your mind wandered where did it go?

Thoughts? – Memories, worries, planning, time, food?

Sensations? – Restlessness, pain, hot/cold

Emotions? – Sad, angry, fearful, happy, secure, loving

### **2. Layer 2 – *dialoguing about them (placing the direct noticing in a personal context of understanding) e.g.:***

- How did you feel when your mind wandered?
- 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 – what were the sensations of e.g. 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? – 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)***

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 the participants themselves to come naturally to a process of making the links in relation to the application of the learning to their life through the process of integration of the material offered in the programme and the mindfulness-based learning. 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

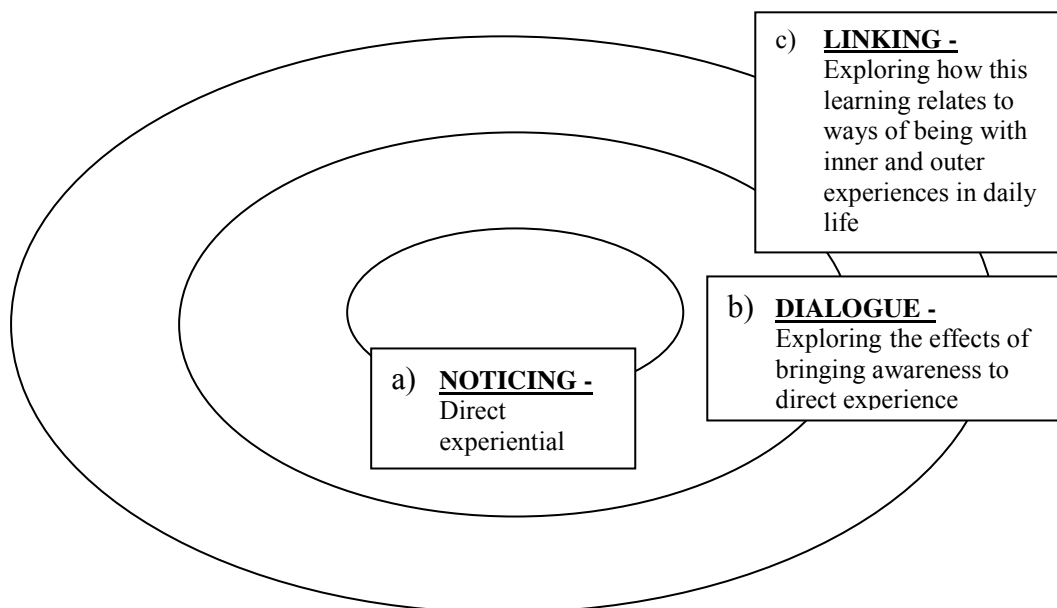
vulnerability which the programme is adapted for – e.g. relapse prevention in depression, chronic fatigue etc. This process is held mainly by the teacher who supports participants in integrating their direct experience with contextual understanding about the particular challenge they are working with.

So linkage is helping participants to illuminate their seeing of:

- 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).

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; better to see the ‘circles’ as a *map* for the teacher.

**Table 2: The three concentric circles and layers of inquiry**



(iii) *teaching of themes conveys understanding of underpinning theoretical principles*  
 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” (Contributions to Analytical Psychology, 1928). 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). The challenge for the mindfulness-based teacher is to know the underpinning theoretical principles thoroughly so that

they can inform direction and emphasis within this implicit teaching process, and so that they are readily available for occasional moments of brief didactic teaching.

The majority of the material for exploration within the group is generated by the participants rather than by the teacher – but 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.

- (iv) *teaching skills – teaching is concise, clear, participatory, playful, alive, responsive, and makes skilful use of teaching aids*

*Concise and clear* – the teaching crystallises key processes in an accessible manner.

*Participatory* – the teaching process draws on all ways in which humans experience – thinking, sensing and feeling – and aims to engage all these elements within participants during the teaching.

Didactic teaching is based on material drawn from direct experience; experience of participants is invited in relation to material offered. As much material as possible is drawn out of the direct experience of the group, so that any didactic material is ‘woven’ from lived experience – the teacher collaborates with participants to link direct observations of experience to learning relevant to the participant and to the aims of the programme. When teaching didactically the teaching is brief and clear; engages all elements of experiencing (thinking, sensing and feeling) and encourages interactive responses from participants’ own experience.

*Playful, alive and responsive* – the teaching is engaging and inspiring; the participants and the teacher are mutually engaged in a creative exploration of the material; it is a highly ‘in the moment process’ – 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 in navigating towards dimensions of the material which are highly relevant to the immediacy of participants’ experience; the teacher shows skill in deflecting participants from getting stuck in their stories, and instead keeps the focus on immediate experience.

*Use of teaching aids* – teacher makes skilful and appropriate use of 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 these 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.

- (v) *fluency – teacher conveys ease, familiarity with and confident knowledge of the material*

*Ease* – the teacher is clearly at home within the material.

*Familiarity with the material* – 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 their knowledge and experience and so inspires confidence in the process of the teaching

## Domain 6: Facilitating 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 managing group safety, trust and boundary issues; through employing a teaching style which 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:**

*(i) Learning container - creating and sustaining a rich 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*

*(ii) Group development - clear management of group development processes over the 8 weeks – in particular management of beginnings, challenges from within the group and endings*

*(iii) Common humanity - moving from personal to universal learning - the teacher consistently opens the learning process towards connection with the universality of the processes under exploration*

*(iv) Leadership style which offers sustained ‘holding’, demonstrating authority and potency without imposing the teacher’s views on participants*

	<b>Examples</b>
Incompetent	Group learning environment is managed ineffectively and unsafely.
Beginner	At least one key skill at an adequate level – e.g. teacher shows some attention to group safety, but lacks awareness in managing group stages, boundaries or process.
Advanced Beginner	Several key features at a competent level but some inconsistency in managing aspects of group process – e.g. group boundaries and safety are adequately taken care of, but communication style during inquiry may be overly focused on the individual to the exclusion of awareness of group process, or awareness of normal group development processes may not be clearly integrated into teaching,
Competent	Most key features present to a competent level of skill with some gaps or inconsistencies – e.g. sensitivity and awareness of group process is generally integrated into the teaching, and safety is well attended to, but lack of potency, or sustained ‘holding’ of the group environment
Proficient	Teacher demonstrates well developed skills in working with and facilitating group learning environment. All key features present with only a few minor inconsistencies. The 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.
Advanced	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. All key features present to high skill level.

## **Domain 6: Holding of group learning environment – guidance notes**

- (i) *Learning container - creating and sustaining a rich 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 both creating a place of safety and a place in which participants can engage in an exploration of themselves in ways which 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 which being in a group arouses within the individual. For example, s/he responds skilfully to expressions of difference and to competition within the group, holding boundaries whilst 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 – 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 (respect for each others’ contributions, stepping back from giving each other advice)
- encouragement to express and explore a range of different experiences among group members - whether experienced as positive or negative. This cultivates a sense that there is room in the group for all experience to be safely explored.

- (ii) *Group development - clear management of group development processes over the 8 weeks – in particular management of beginnings, challenges from within the group and endings*

The teacher deliberately works with and responds to group development processes with appropriate management of beginnings (including establishing safety, ground rules, confidentiality, group norms etc. both at the beginning and 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 through 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 ongoing needs.

(iii) *Common humanity - moving from personal to universal learning - the teacher consistently opens the learning process towards connection with the universality 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. Inquiry is an engagement with an individual within the context of a group of participants. The teacher needs to balance these processes, drawing out from the 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 – a movement from the personal to the universal.

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

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

(iv) *Leadership style which offers sustained ‘holding’, demonstrating authority and potency without imposing the teacher’s views on participants*

*Creating and sustaining a context within which it is possible to take risks/explore edges*

The leadership style that the teacher adopts conveys a sense of:

- *purposefulness of intention* (this is different from striving for particular outcomes)
- *confidence and faith* in the process of bringing mindful attention to experience: faith in this context arises out of the experience the teacher has in this process – through this s/he is able to invite the trust of participants in engaging in this learning process over these 8 weeks with an open mind
- *potency* – the teacher carries influence and authority in a way which inspires the respect of participants and simultaneously encourages them to look towards their own expertise
- *authority* – whilst 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 are relating 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. Not a hierarchical authority – but a clear sense of being thoroughly ‘at home’ within this process of learning and having trodden this path for oneself, knowing it well. An authority which is derived from: personal practice, psychological and spiritual development, experience of teaching mindfulness, and expertise in a professional discipline; the experience which leads to this authority is unique and thoroughly processed. When the teacher talks or acts from this material her/his real or symbolic authorship of it is evident – both the 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 – a sense that there is something here to lean on while they engage in this learning process. In order for the participants to be able to disclose and explore difficult material there must be both trust and confidence in the teacher.

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# **Assessing mindfulness-based teacher competence**

Teacher:

Date of session and session number:

Assessor:

Date of Assessment:

Videotape

Audiotape

Live Observation

## MINDFULNESS-BASED INTERVENTIONS – TEACHING ASSESSMENT CRITERIA: SUMMARY SHEET

Domain	<i>Key features (use following pages to offer qualitative feedback)</i>	<i>Incompetent 1</i>	<i>Beginner 2</i>	<i>Advanced Beginner 3</i>	<i>Competent 4</i>	<i>Proficient 5</i>	<i>Advanced 6</i>
<b>Coverage, pacing and organisation of session curriculum</b>	<i>Adherence to curriculum; Responsiveness and flexibility in adhering; Appropriateness of themes and content; Organisation of teacher, room and materials; Session flow and pacing</i>						
<b>Relational skills</b>	<i>Authenticity and potency; Connection and acceptance; compassion and warmth; Curiosity and respect, Mutuality</i>						
<b>Embodiment of mindfulness</b>	<i>Present moment focus Present moment responsiveness Calm and alertness Attitudinal foundations Person of the teacher</i>						
<b>Guiding mindfulness practices</b>	<i>Language - precise and spacious Key learning for each practice available Elements to consider when guiding</i>						
<b>Conveying course themes through interactive inquiry and didactic teaching</b>	<i>Experiential focus Layers within the inquiry process Conveying learning Teaching skills Fluency</i>						
<b>Holding of group learning environment</b>	<i>Learning container Group development Common humanity Leadership style</i>						

**MINDFULNESS-BASED INTERVENTIONS – TEACHING ASSESSMENT CRITERIA  
COMMENTARY SHEET**

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