

Queensland Sangha Association Inc

INTRODUCTION to BUDDHIST CHAPLAINCY – Oct/Nov/Dec 2023

1. WHAT IS A BUDDHIST CHAPLAIN?

A Buddhist Chaplain is someone who aspires to the path of service - helping and supporting others - as a central part of their life and Buddhist practice.

The work that Buddhist Chaplains do is wide ranging and may include: supporting people who are facing life difficulties (relationship and family problems, unemployment, bereavement, etc.); providing pastoral care in hospitals, hospices, aged care facilities, prisons and universities; teaching Buddhism, meditation and mindfulness; running Buddhist centres and groups; caring for children, the sick, the elderly and dying; supporting community members in times of conflict or natural disaster.

In Australia most Buddhist Chaplains are volunteers; they work in unpaid helping roles inside Buddhist communities as well as in the general community. They can be ordained or lay people and may or may not be publicly acknowledged as 'chaplains'.

2. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is a short practical course (20 hours of class participation, 100 hours in total) designed for people who are engaged in any sort of voluntary helping work.

Responding to requests for help and support can be deeply challenging. So this course offers some basic tools, training and skills, in how to help and support others especially people who are in crisis or significant emotional distress. The topics to be covered in the course include: what it means from a Buddhist and western psychological perspective to help others, the limits to helping, assessment of needs, appropriate referral, counselling skills (notably listening skills and effective verbal communication), differences and sensitivities within Buddhist communities, common mental health issues and problems encountered by Buddhist chaplains, preventing suicide, and self-care for chaplains.

The course does not assume or require any in-depth knowledge of Buddhism or any prior training in psychology or counselling.

The course is open to anyone who is interested. We welcome students from all Buddhist traditions and backgrounds. We also welcome non-Buddhists and anyone committed to inter-faith chaplaincy.

3. MODE OF COURSE DELIVERY

This course will be taught on-line (via Zoom). All Students will need to have access to a computer or tablet - plus a well-functioning internet connection.

Course participants will meet via zoom for 20 hours - over five Sundays (9am-1pm AEST in Queensland) on the following dates:

- 29 October
- 5 November
- 12 November
- 26 November
- 3 December

These class meetings will include short lectures, classroom discussion and exercises in listening/communication skills.

In addition to the zoom classes, students will be asked to complete approximately 80 hours of additional work. This will include:

- Completing assigned reading prior to attending class meetings
- Practising listening and verbal communication skills between class meetings
- Undertaking a small amount of basic internet research on differences in Buddhist traditions
- Undertaking a visit to a Buddhist group or temple (in a different tradition to your own) and writing a short report on this visit;
- Completing a final (take home) exam paper

4. COURSE ASSESSMENT

- attendance and participation in all five class meetings (or 4 meetings plus completion of an additional written assignment).
- participation in classroom discussion of assigned reading
- participation in the in-class training exercises in listening & verbal communication skills. By the final class of the course students need to be able to demonstrate basic competency in the listening and verbal communication skills taught in this course.
- Submission of a short written report on a visit to a Buddhist temple or group in a different tradition to your own
- Completion of a take-home exam (to be emailed to students after the final class; completed exam papers will be due one week later)

Students who complete all the course requirements will receive a Certificate of Completion that details their achievements.

5. ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS FOR COURSE

- a. completion of high school or equivalent, or a higher qualification. Students who do not have these qualifications but have a good basic education and life experience in helping work are also welcome to apply.
- b. a good level of written and spoken English. The study level of this course generally corresponds to diploma level training at an Australian university. The course includes reading and discussion of English-language texts, some of which may be quite challenging, as well as written assignments (reports and an exam paper). Thus a good level of written and spoken English is required. Please discuss with the Course Convenor if you are uncertain about your language skills (additional support is available for students for whom English is not their first language).

6. HOW TO APPLY FOR ADMISSION TO THE COURSE

To apply for admission to this course please send an email to Barbara Sullivan barbara.sullivan4005@gmail.com

In your application email please provide the following information:

- Your full name, email address, postal address, and telephone number (land line or mobile).
- Your academic qualifications and English language ability (see 'Admission Requirements' above)
- Please also tell us about your background in Buddhism (what temple, centre or group do you belong to now? What other experience have you had in Buddhist communities?)
- Have you had any experience – as a professional or volunteer - in chaplaincy or helping work?

7. COURSE FEES

There are no fees for this course. It is freely offered by the QSA and all administration and teaching staff are volunteers. However, the QSA depends on donations to cover its costs so, if students have the capacity to do so, they are asked to make a donation (of any size) to the QSA. This can be done by direct bank transfer:

Name of account	Queensland Sangha Association Inc
Bank name	Heritage Bank
BSB number	638-070
Account number	1159-2818

Please also email the QSA to let them know you have made a donation (infoqsa@gmail.com).

8. COURSE CONVENER

The course convenor is Dr Barbara Sullivan BDS (Syd), PhD (Qld), Dip Holistic Counselling. Dr Sullivan has taught this course for the QSA the last eight years - in both face-to-face and online mode. She is a retired Senior Lecturer at the University of Queensland, a currently practicing counsellor and a Buddhist Chaplain registered with the Queensland Sangha Association. Barbara can be contacted by phone (0424048654) or by email at barbara.sullivan4005@gmail.com

Please note this course is aimed at volunteers and is not a professional training in pastoral care or school chaplaincy. For information about professional training in pastoral care please consult the Queensland Institute of Pastoral Education Inc, [Qld Institute of Clinical Pastoral Education | \(qicpe.com\)](http://qicpe.com). Courses at the Nan Tien Institute of Higher Education are also recommended - [Nan Tien Institute | Study Buddhism, Health, Wellbeing and Mental Health](http://nti.edu.au). To be employed as a School Chaplain in Australia a Certificate IV in Pastoral Care, Youth Work or Chaplaincy & Pastoral Care (or a higher qualification) is required. See further information about School Chaplaincy requirements at [Requirements for the role | Applying to be a School Chaplain \(chappy.org.au\)](http://chappy.org.au).