

# About the Buddhism level 2 Course

## Overview of the Course

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This course will give you a firm foundation in Buddhist thought and practice. It is aimed at people with a basic grounding in meditation and Buddhism, who want to discover whether and how to apply Buddhism in their lives.

This course runs in six 6-week modules. Each module stands alone, and so you can join and leave the course at any point. You don't need to take the modules in order.

Each session will run from 7.30pm – 10pm. They will usually comprise: a short meditation; a semi-formal presentation by the leader(s); discussion time for participants to relate the material to their own life; experiential workshop aspects.

The course is not intended to be an academic introduction to Buddhism: the emphasis is on the practical application of Buddhist teachings to our own lives.

There will usually be some “practical homework” to do between sessions: this will not usually be study-based. Suggested reading will be given so that you can gain the most from the course, but it will not be integral to the course.

## Pre-Requisites

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You will need to have completed:

- the Introduction to Buddhism course, or to have an equivalent knowledge of Buddhism.
- The Introduction to Meditation course, or to be familiar with the Mindfulness of Breathing and Metta Bhavana meditation practices.

## Course Aims

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By the end of the course, you should:

- Be able to relate Buddhist teachings to your own experience, and practise them in your daily life.
- Have an appreciation of the breadth and living spirit of the Buddhist tradition, while bringing a critical faculty to your understanding of it.
- See the different Buddhist practices (ethics, meditation, study, friendship, ritual) as an integrated system of development.
- Develop relationships with other participants by sharing experiences and ideas, in order to support practice and stimulate understanding.
- Understand what it means to “be a Buddhist”, and have a sense whether or not you consider yourself to be one.

## Course Outline – The Six Modules

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The six modules are listed below, together with their proposed content — the actual content may vary slightly according to the judgement of the leader.

### ***What makes you a Buddhist?***

What does it mean to Go for Refuge to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha?

- Going for Refuge
- Enlightenment as the goal of Buddhism – working with goals and values
- Dharma as truth teaching – approach to doctrine, parable of raft, 3 levels of wisdom
- Dharma as method – become a Dharma chef, threefold path
- Faith within a Buddhist context
- Building a Sangha

### ***Dharma Truth Teachings***

Some core ideas to gain a new perspective on our lives.

- Views – wrong view, right view, perfect view; qualities of Dharma
- Conditionality – conditioned co-production as the middle way
- Facets of conditionality – impermanence, compoundedness, interconnectedness
- Four Noble Truths
- Orders of conditionality – reactive and creative; karmic and non-karmic conditionality
- Wisdom and compassion – altruistic dimension of Buddhism, Bodhisattva ideal

### ***Ritual and Devotion***

Exploring the psychology and meaning of Buddhist ritual through the ‘Sevenfold Puja’

- Who/what do Buddhists worship? Commitment to a path of personal development
- The practice of openness, disclosure and confession
- The importance of developing positive emotion
- Receptivity: turning towards what is deepest in ourselves and the universe
- The ‘awakening heart’ (bodhicitta)
- The Heart Sutra: the essence of emptiness. Chanting, and the use of mantras

### ***Symbolic Dharma***

An overview of the whole of life’s dynamics in symbolic form.

- The wheel of life – knowing our realm
- The wheel of life – karma and rebirth
- The wheel of life – the chain of conditioning, “staying in the gap” The spiral path – to Insight and beyond
- The mandala of the five Buddhas – Akshobya and Amitabha
- The mandala of the five Buddhas – Ratnasambhava, Amoghasiddhi & Vairocana

## ***Buddhist Ethics***

Seeing the implications of our behaviour for ourselves and others

Ethics as individual choice

Love – the golden rule

Generosity – respecting and contributing

Contentment – weakening the neurotic drives

Honesty – being true about ourselves

Awareness – the working edge for any growth

## ***A Path with Heart***

How can the more “heart” aspects of the Dharma constitute a path that complements the language of “insight”?

Working with the emotions: the divine abodes

Myth and the imaginal faculty

The myth of the Bodhisattva

Spiritual Community

Spiritual Friendship

Arts, Beauty and Creativity