

**Oxford Mindfulness Centre  
Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT)  
Teacher Training Pathway**

## **The Complete Pathway**

Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2013; MBCT) has a growing evidence-base both for its effectiveness and its cost-effectiveness (Gotink et al., 2015; Kuyken et al., 2016). MBCT is increasingly being cited in guidelines (such as NICE, 2009) and there is a growing demand from people who wish to participate in MBCT programs and from organisations that wish to offer MBCT.

In order for MBCT research to be possible and for the programme to become widely accessible, sufficient numbers of MBCT teachers and trainers are required. The Oxford Mindfulness Centre aims to contribute to the effectiveness and sustainability of the community of teachers and trainers of MBCT by offering high quality training which supports and is guided by innovation and research and enables competent delivery of the programme.

This document describes our MBCT teacher and trainer development pathway with the intention of clarifying the way in which we endeavour to enable potential teachers and trainers to develop their skills and competency.

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## **Oxford Mindfulness Centre Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) Teacher Training Pathway**

### **OMC MBCT Teacher Training Pathway - description**

- Has integrity at its heart and the “long view” in mind (graduates of any training programme are the future of MBCT).
- References as benchmarks and draws upon the UK Network Good Practice Guidelines (R.S. Crane, 2011) the MBCT-specific guidelines published in the MBCT manual (Segal et al., 2013; p. 422) and the international MBCT training pathway.
- Offers a coherent, stepped approach, describing progress from novice through to advanced MBCT teacher/trainer.
- Integrates formal teaching with experiential workshops and residential, training, skills training and supervision/mentoring.
- Builds practical skills training in the relative safety of peer teaching (teaching practice in pairs and then groups), progressing onto apprenticeship teaching of live groups under supervision.
- Involves establishing and sustaining a personal practice at each stage.
- Provides safeguards for MBCT teachers and participants and promotes best practice by requiring participants to work within the ethical codes of their professional bodies. If they do not have such a code, training in and attention to codes set out by the most relevant professional body are suggested as a safeguard to promote good practice (Baer, 2015).
- Uses the Mindfulness-Based Interventions Teacher Assessment of Competency (MBI-TAC) (R. S. Crane et al., 2013) as both a formative and summative tool.
- Is evidence-based, relying on the best available evidence to inform teacher training.

## Oxford Mindfulness Centre Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) Teacher Training Pathway

### Step 1 – Starting out

#### Pre-requisites for training to teach MBCT

In order to apply for teacher training it is necessary to have the following in place:

- An experiential understanding of mindfulness through personal meditation practice. This should normally be for at least a year before entering the pathway.

Regular mindfulness practice is the foundation of good quality teaching and without it whatever is taught is not based in an in depth appreciation of mindfulness and compassion.

- An experiential understanding of the 8-week MBCT programme, including commitment to personal practice, through participation in a structured 8-week MBCT programme as a participant.

Taking such a course develops and deepens personal meditation practice and provides an experience of the course as it is usually delivered. The OMC offers 8 week or 5-day experiential MBCT courses. If you are unable to attend any of our MBCT courses, or their equivalent, you may find a suitable course by going to the Mindfulness Network Listing [mindfulness-network.org](http://mindfulness-network.org) which ensures that the teachers listed meet the Good Practice Guidelines for teaching. Where attending an MBCT class is not possible, attending an 8-week MBSR course is the next option. If this is not possible, for example if you live in a location where a face to face MBCT or MBSR course is not available, the next option is an online programme that can provide this training, along with access to weekly inquiry with a teacher (such as the Mindful Mood Balance Pro web-based training at [mindfulnoggin.com/mindful-mood-balance](http://mindfulnoggin.com/mindful-mood-balance)).

- Knowledge and experience of the population to which MBCT will be delivered, including experience of teaching, therapeutic, or other care provision.

This would normally include *qualifications* that enable you to teach MBCT with the population and within the context in which you plan to teach. For example, for MBCT for depression you would need a qualification in clinical practice and mental health training that includes the use of structured, evidence-based therapeutic approaches (e.g. CBT, interpersonal therapy, behavioural activation) and the knowledge/skills to work with clinical populations.

In some cases, for example teaching to the general public, MBCT teachers may not have a professional qualification. In this case additional training may be required, for example in CBT

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models and approaches and in mental health awareness. If you have little knowledge or experience of CBT, the Oxford Cognitive Therapy Centre (OCTC) has short courses e.g. introduction to CBT which can be done face to face or on line.

- Skills for working with individuals or groups.

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### Step 2 – Learning to teach

#### Developing Competency as an MBCT teacher

There are three core training routes to developing competency offered by the Oxford Mindfulness Centre, once the prerequisites have been completed: the Master of Studies in MBCT or the Foundational training routes (and apprenticeship) which are described below.

##### Academic Route:

#### Master of Studies in Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy – 2 years

This unique course is offered by the Oxford Mindfulness Centre at the University of Oxford, Department of Psychiatry, in collaboration with the University of Oxford Department for Continuing Education. Successful completion of the course leads to an award of a Master of Studies by the University of Oxford. Over the two years, the course weaves together experiential embodied understanding of the structure, curriculum and intentions of MBCT with its theoretical basis, including relevant aspects of cognitive and clinical psychology, as well as aspects of Buddhist psychology and philosophy upon which MBCT draws. It provides the opportunity for students to develop the practical skills they need in order to translate knowledge and understanding into gaining competency as MBCT teachers. The Masters aims to provide the in-depth knowledge and skills needed to become a competent teacher and disseminator of high quality MBCT through access to some of the leading teachers and researchers in the world.

The course is taught, part-time, over two years, and is organised in nine three-day teaching blocks (held in Oxford) and two intensive practice residentials, and one residential foundational skills training, all of which aim to foster the embodiment and understanding that supports MBCT teaching. Teaching is assessed using the MBI-TAC and *summative* assessment of competency is provided (see below). Following the Masters training course participants who are rated as competent to teach will have fulfilled The UK Network for Mindfulness-Based Teacher Training Organisations' [‘Good Practice Guidelines for Teachers of Mindfulness-Based Interventions’](#).

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### Non Academic Routes:

- **Foundational Training in teaching MBCT – 1 year**
- **Intensive Foundational Training in Teaching MBCT – 7 day Residential**

This training route is in three parts:

1. Foundational Training / Intensive Foundational Training in Teaching MBCT.
2. Beginning to teach MBCT and Apprenticeship.
3. Assessment of competency

Participants who complete all three stages of this training and who are rated as competent to teach, will fulfill The UK Network for Mindfulness-Based Teacher Training Organisations' [‘Good Practice Guidelines for Teachers of Mindfulness-Based Interventions’](#).

### Foundational Training in Teaching MBCT – 1 year

The Foundational Training Course in teaching MBCT is a largely skills based course offered by the OMC on an annual basis. Its intentions are to enable participants to understand the background, theory and structure of MBCT through taught days led by leading specialists in the field; to deepen personal mindfulness practice and experiential understanding of the MBCT course, including an embodied understanding of the process of change; to understand the intentions underpinning the various elements of the MBCT course, its scientific basis, ethical framework, structure and sequence of the curriculum. It also offers the opportunity to consider sensitivity to how MBCT is adapted in the context of childbirth and parenting (MBCP). The Foundational training facilitates the development of teaching skills through practicing teaching the curriculum in a safe setting with peers and provides a solid platform for developing further teaching skills to competency level which takes place through apprenticeship as described in the next section. *Formative* assessment of teaching skill is provided using the MBI-TAC.

The course is taught part-time over one year and is organised in three terms with teaching taking place usually one day per fortnight. A 4-day intensive practice residential (retreat) is included in term two.

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### Beginning to Teach MBCT and Apprenticeship

The second part of training to teach competently involves trainee teachers beginning to teach the MBCT course to people within their own field/area of expertise, *having completed the Foundational training*. Working towards competency through closely supervised teaching takes place over as long a period as necessary to enable enough space for preparation, teaching, supervision and reflection. Progression from one step to the next is an opportunity to pause and consider readiness to progress; sometimes a person will be ready and other times more work may be needed before progressing.

As students come towards the end of the *three terms*, their mentor will help to consider plans for completing these final parts of training to competency (i.e. the apprenticeship and later summative competency rating). This includes establishing co-teaching opportunities with a more experienced teacher or trainer of MBCT and engagement with an ongoing supervision process ideally involving regular reviewing of recordings, using the MBI-TAC as a supervision and learning tool.

Supervision can be organised either privately with an appropriately qualified and experienced individual or via the [Mindfulness Network Community Interest Company \(CIC\)](#). The UK Network for Mindfulness-Based Teacher Trainer Organisations [Good Practice Guidelines for Trainers of Mindfulness-Based Teachers](#) can help trainee teachers to identify which trainers might be qualified to provide them with supervision.

In the unlikely situation where it is not possible to identify a suitably qualified and experienced co-teacher, closer supervision and support will be required. All trainee teachers and qualified teachers should receive supervision, even when co-teaching. The OMC offers support to help identify a co-teacher by providing links with previous students and alumni, whenever possible. We have also produced guidelines for both the co-teacher and trainee teacher which are intended to clarify roles within such an arrangement.



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### **Intensive Foundational Training in Teaching MBCT – 7 day Residential**

The intention of this 7-day training is to provide participants who have met all the prerequisites for training to be a teacher with an opportunity to directly experience the 8-session programme of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) and learn about the theoretical underpinnings of MBCT. You will practise teaching elements of MBCT to one another in pairs, with supervision and feedback from the instructors and peers. The training is an introduction to teaching MBCT.

This training provides participants with direct experience of the 8-session programme of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), and offers opportunities to practise teaching elements of MBCT to one another, with supervision from the trainers and each other. Participants are expected to have some prior knowledge and experience of mindfulness and of cognitive therapy, and to have a serious interest in bringing MBCT into their lives and work.

Participants should already have attended an 8-week course on mindfulness-based approaches, and should have a regular, established mindfulness meditation personal practice.

The programme reflects the integration of personal practice and professional application that is central to the approach. It includes a blend of didactic, experiential and small group work. Specific themes and areas of focus will include:

- The seamless cultivation of mindfulness throughout the workshop, through formal and informal practices, both in silence and in conversation and dialogue.
- An overview of the development of MBCT and the theory underpinning it, and a review of research supporting its clinical value.
- Mindful approaches to the experience and expression of pain, depression, stress and anxiety within ourselves and those with whom we work.
- Discussion about the importance of experiencing enough mindfulness meditation practice and self-inquiry to starting to work with mindfulness as a clinician.
- Opportunities to practice teaching key meditation practices, with feedback from fellow participants and from the instructors.

The training is an introduction to teaching MBCT, and a platform for developing further teaching skills through an apprenticeship. Attendance will not necessarily mean that you can now teach MBCT, but is an integral part of a pathway to developing competency and ethical practice as described by the Good Practice Guidelines for teachers.

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### **Beginning to Teach MBCT and Apprenticeship**

If you choose this training route you may need to undertake further structured training in teaching MBCT, in order to develop competency as described by the MBI-TAC criteria, depending upon your skills and prior experience/training. Some of this might be gained through attending workshops in core MBCT skills eg: Enquiry, C in MBCT. In keeping with the good practice guidelines and the International Training Pathway it is recommended that you attend a residential mindfulness retreat of at least 4 days as part of your teaching journey. You may also need to undertake a longer period of supervision with an MBCT trainer / highly experienced teacher.

### **International Training**

If you are not resident in the UK and wish to access the Oxford Mindfulness Centre's training pathway, there are two options:

- Attending the Intensive Foundational Training in Teaching MBCT – 7 day Residential in the UK as described above and organising your own extended apprenticeship with our guidance
- The OMC may be able to offer organisations an Intensive Foundational Training in Teaching MBCT – 7 day Residential in your country. Please contact us for further details

## **Oxford Mindfulness Centre Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) Teacher Training Pathway**

### **Assessment of MBCT Teacher Competency**

Trainee teachers can arrange for their teaching to be formally rated for competency when their supervisor agrees they are ready. If the rater concurs that they meet the criteria across all domains of the MBI-TAC, they will receive a certificate of competency to teach MBCT from the Oxford Mindfulness Centre.

As part of the summative feedback, the OMC will help to consider what further training, experience and/or personal development might be appropriate.

Once the trainee teacher and their supervisor have agreed readiness for formal assessment, the following steps are usually followed:

1. The applicant will be asked to supply a portfolio outlining their readiness to be assessed. This would typically include (1) reasons for the application and (2) summarised (and ideally evidenced) information demonstrating that they have fulfilled the prerequisites as outlined in the Oxford MBCT Training Pathway. The portfolio should also include evidence of meeting the GPG's for MBCT teachers.
2. Once the portfolio has been reviewed as meeting the pre-requisites, the applicant will be asked to supply recordings of all the 8 sessions of the MBCT course, along with a page explaining the teaching context, to an independent assessor. This should be someone different from their supervisor, and be an MBCT trainer from the OMC core team or an Associate Trainer.
3. The assessors will always rate two whole sessions (and more if required) for competency in teaching MBCT using the MBI-TAC. Normally this will be one from the first half of the course (not session 1) and one from the second half of the course (not session 8). The approach to assessment of competency is set out in the MBI-TAC Manual. Where a person has been co-teaching, assessment will include their teaching of the core meditation practices and a sample of psychoeducation exercises.

An independent moderator will moderate both the competency assessment and the feedback. This may include further review of the recordings and discussion with the assessor. Also over time, the moderator will have a good sense of the congruence *between* the assessors in the use of the MBI-TAC. Moderation normally takes approximately one hour

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4. A certificate of competence is issued if the applicant meets criteria for competence on ALL six domains of the MBI-TAC. Summative feedback will be provided that includes strengths and areas for development

If the person **does not** yet meet competency across the domains, feedback will also be provided that includes strengths, areas for development and what is required to meet competency. The person can then come back to be reassessed at Step 2, providing a statement of how the feedback has informed further learning.

NB: This process is an integral part of the Master of Studies in MBCT

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### Step 3 – Teaching

#### Further Development of Teaching Skills - Proficiency and Specialist Training

To ensure the long term sustainability of MBCT, it is important for competent MBCT teachers to continue to develop in the following ways:

- Deepening experiential understanding of mindfulness – Attending regular teacher led residential retreats can be very helpful in this process and the OMC offers a bi-annual seven day intensive practice residential.
- Creating opportunities to share experiences and learn collaboratively  
This can be achieved informally with colleagues, alumni networks and through ongoing supervision. The Mindfulness network CIC offers MBCT supervision (see above) and some OMC associates and trainers offer supervision on a private basis. Peer supervision is also an important part of this process of development
- Developing skills and understanding of MBCT and other mindfulness based approaches, including keeping up to date with the evidence base – attending Master Classes, Workshops and conferences to facilitate further learning. Our annual summer school thoroughly explores a key theme related to MBCT
- The Foundational Training and the Masters programme provide solid platforms for developing **specialist skills** for application in a range of settings. For example, the OMC offers a series of Master Classes which are specifically directed to applying mindfulness in the workplace and non-clinical settings each year. This programme is in development and we aim to expand the range of contexts for specialist training.

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### Beyond the Steps

#### Becoming an MBCT Trainer

To train the next generation of MBCT teachers, it is important that we develop MBCT Trainers. Investing in trainers who can offer high quality training programmes will reap extraordinary dividends, as graduates of their programmes go on to touch the lives of thousands of people.

The OMC references as benchmarks the UK Good Practice Guidelines for *Trainers* of Mindfulness Based teachers

At present, the OMC typically develops trainers using a mentoring/apprenticeship model. Most often these teachers are known to us, have already completed the pathway for becoming an MBCT teacher and have attained competency as assessed by the MBI-TAC.

#### **In practice, an MBCT Trainer will be able to:**

- Facilitate the development of teaching skills in others and their understanding of how the theoretical basis of MBCT informs that teaching.
- Supervise and lead debriefing sessions for MBCT courses taught by others.
- Assess competency using the MBI-TAC.
- Disseminate skills and theoretical knowledge.

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Below is a pathway which is typically followed by our trainee trainers.



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