

Institute of Buddhist Studies

Contextual Education Handbook



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Introduction

As stated in the IBS catalog, the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) program “prepares students to engage fully and with confidence in ministry, chaplaincy, and related professions as well as further academic work.” The program fosters a nuanced understanding of Buddhism in its aim to “develop skilled, thoughtful and effective leaders grounded in the Buddhist tradition, able to think critically and respond constructively to the needs of a changing world.” Contextual Education is critical to the aims of this program by providing a “hands-on” approach to real world involvement. Contextual Education provides a platform in which theoretical study is integrated with practical application by way of a structured and mentored system. Regardless of your intended vocation, integrating Buddhist teachings while working in other institutions of service will enhance your skills and formation as a leader.

This handbook lays out the program, process, procedures, and policies of the IBS Contextual Education Program. You will find explanations, checklists, and information regarding site selection, registration, units, and CPE should you choose this route. You will find all the information you need to be successful. You will also find a list of helpful resources at the end of the handbook whose aim is to make this a meaningful and supportive endeavor in the process of your formation. I wish you well as your journey unfolds and you go out into the world as a spiritual leader in the making.

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Contextual Education

Much of pastoral care education is based on the action reflection action model in that one engages community and then reflects on that activity within the sphere of religious tradition. The intention behind contextual education is to cultivate a functionally engaged relationship between real world situational experience and the development of pastoral competency within a professional context. The context (Field Site) is a location of practical experience which is reflected upon through the lens of the students' pastoral education. The insights culminated from this experience are then reflected in the students' course work, demonstrating the integration of action and reflection and illustrating the authentic development of the students' own meaning of service.

Contextual Education at IBS focusses on community-based settings with student driven placement and engagement at the heart of its operation. The goal in choosing a site is a placement that allows regular contact with people; not a placement where you work alone or have primarily administrative duties. The placement can be at various types of sites – church, temple, sangha, healthcare setting, prison, or community care based non-profit etc. Students must have oversight, guidance, and evaluation. Students can choose to do Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) in place of CE. CPE is covered in the second half of this handbook.

Determining Academic Credit

Academic credit is earned based on the number of hours the student works in the field. Three units (3) of Contextual Education are currently required to earn a Master of Divinity (MDiv) degree at the IBS while students have the option to complete a maximum of nine (9) units total. For non-CPE sites, students enroll in a three (3) unit recurring FE course which includes a Contextual Learning Class (1-1.5 hours of class, 3-3.5 hours outside reading and reflection per week) and 4.5 hours per week (minimum), on-site volunteering (flexible supervision). For CPE programs, one (1) unit of CPE is 400 hours of work. One (1) unit of CPE is equivalent to six (6) CE units. CPE students enroll in an FE course and the site program is self-contained with no additional class at the IBS. The policies for Contextual Education are governed by the IBS catalog, "Contextual Education Policy."

Steps to Earning Contextual Education Credit at IBS

Students should:

1. Consult with the contextual education director and their academic advisor to determine whether conducting field education at this point in their academic career is feasible. Be prepared to discuss their intention to pursue contextual education, their desired outcomes, and what opportunities exist to meet those outcomes. Usually, contextual education should be done no earlier than the second year of the MDiv program.
2. Consider whether they will choose a site from the Approved Contextual Education Field Sites or propose a new field education setting. Proposing a new field education setting requires discussion with and approval of the contextual education director and the dean.
3. Determining a Work Site
 - a. A number of local, pre-approved field work sites are available and listed in the next section. Students must self-initiate and apply to these sites. *Shin Buddhist ministerial candidates should consult with the Ministerial Program Coordinator about the possibility of doing contextual education at a BCA-affiliated temple.*
 - b. New Field Site: In general, a proposed site should be an organization that engages the student in responsibilities that bring them in direct contact with the public, such as offering pastoral care, community support activities, and social activism. Examples: churches, sanghas, temples, prisons, hospitals, nursing homes, college campuses; advocacy, environment, and social change groups.
 - c. Submit a New Field Site Authorization form if they are proposing a new site. All new sites must be approved by their contextual education advisor and the dean.
Note: the work at the site should accommodate the learning goals of the student (see the next item).
4. Submit a Contextual Education Proposal Form to the contextual education director, describing the work to be done and a draft of their learning goals. See section in this handbook titled, “Crafting Learning Goals for the Contextual Education Proposal Form.”
5. Register for “FE-2400 Concurrent Field Study” course. This is a three (3) unit course.
6. Reference the IBS catalog “Contextual Education Policy” and contact the IBS Registrar for details. For information and reduction in fees, see “Tuition & Fees” on the IBS website.
7. Email the midterm supervisor evaluation to their supervisor in time for them to complete and return it before Reading Week/Spring Break, or at the end of Fall semester if in a year-long program. It is incumbent upon the student to assure the supervisor mid-term evaluation is returned on time. The supervisor returns the evaluation directly to the contextual education director via email.
8. Submit the midterm self-evaluation before Reading Week/Spring Break, or at the end of Fall semester if in a year-long program
9. Email the final supervisor evaluation to their supervisor in time for them to complete and return it by the last week of the term in order for a grade to be issued or at the end of

Spring semester if in a year-long program. It is incumbent upon the student to assure the supervisor final evaluation is returned on time. The supervisor returns the evaluation directly to the contextual education director via email.

10. Submit the final self-evaluation by the end of the term or at the end of Spring semester if in a year-long program
11. If CE is to take place or overlap with the summer break, consult with the contextual education director and IBS registrar as to timing and review.

Approved Contextual Education Field Sites

See the [IBS Website](#) for the current list of approved field sites.

Approved BCA Temple Field Sites

See the [IBS Website](#) for the current list of approved BCA field sites.

Crafting Learning Goals for the Contextual Education Proposal Form

Contextual Education is a vital component of pastoral formation and requires the student to deeply and honestly assess their strengths and “growing edges.” This is a matter of theological, vocational, and personal reflection in their process of discernment and development. The intention is for the student to develop an understanding of how they personally manifest the teachings of their tradition in the work of serving other human beings from a variety of backgrounds. With this framework, it is incumbent upon the student to lead the process of crafting goals with the advice and assistance of their contextual education advisor. The student and contextual education advisor meet to produce a proposal so that the parameters of the agreement all coalesce to achieve the learning goals of the student at this particular place and time in their formation.

Pragmatically, the forming of learning goals sets into shape what the student wants to learn and how they intend to learn it. The student needs to consider what outcomes they want to bear from this experience and how the chosen site will help facilitate these goals. The contextual education advisor is there to help the student tease out their strengths and “growing edges” by exploring the student’s fears, limits, apprehensions, and how the goals meet the student’s personal development. Ultimately, the learning goals need to be realistic, achievable, and measurable with direct correlation to the work being done at the chosen site.

(The following learning goal guidelines were adopted verbatim from the Starr King School of Ministry with permission.)

NICE

Personal learning goals stem from the following dimensions of your developing professional identity:

- N – Needs. What skills do I need to develop?
- I – Interests. What are my areas of interest that can be explored further?
- C – Concerns. What is uncomfortable/concerning in my professional identity formation?
- E – Expectations. What do I expect to experience or encounter at this field site?

SMART

Excellent learning goals will demonstrate all of the following traits:

- S – Specific (detailed, focused, tied to observable behavior if possible)
- M – Measurable (the results are quantifiable or otherwise recognizable to others)
- A – Attainable (with the resources available in the field education assignment)
- R – Relevant (applicable to the work and your vocational goals)
- T – Time-limited (the term sets an obvious limit, but perhaps some goals can be met at different points during the field education assignment)

In your Contextual Education Proposal Form, please briefly indicate what actions will enable you to achieve your learning goals.

Evaluating a Contextual Education Experience

What distinguishes contextual education from other work experience is the nature and focus on intentional goal setting and evaluation. Doing meaningful self-evaluation and sharing that experience through written expression with the contextual education director, the student exposes their personal development to a witness and guide. This process deepens and solidifies the developmental understanding of the student's own pastoral role and leadership. Through honest and supportive dialogue with the contextual education director, the student can assess how they are or are not meeting their goals, how these goals might change after experiential insight, and what clarity has been gleaned in terms of future vocational pathways. Ideally, the content related to the development of pastoral identity is related in some degree to the work taking place at the field site.

A student mid-term and final self-evaluation, as well as a site supervisor mid-term and final evaluation, are both required to earn academic credit for contextual education. In terms of self-evaluation, the student is encouraged to meet with their contextual education advisor to discuss

their findings prior to writing and submitting the work. The mid-term evaluation is a time for honest and forthright dialogue to determine if and how the student is meeting their goals and/or how the goals might change given what has been learned at that point. The final evaluation should reflect the culminating formation and conclusions resulting from the entire experience. In terms of supervisor evaluations, the student emails a copy of the evaluation to their site supervisor along with the email address of their contextual education advisor. The site supervisor emails the completed evaluation directly to the contextual education advisor to ensure confidentiality and honest feedback.

IBS Contextual Education Forms and Deadlines

- All forms are available on the [IBS Website](#).
- Fall or Spring assignments: midterm evaluations are due on the Friday before Reading Week/Spring Break. Final evaluations are due at the end of the semester.
- Year-long assignments: the midterm evaluation is due at the end of the Fall semester and the final evaluation is due at the close of the Spring semester.
- If the volume of hours offered at the field site demands a year-long commitment in order to fulfill the hours required for contextual education (3 academic units), then the student should complete all of the required forms by the end of the spring semester prior to field site work; and begin work that summer. Then the student's mid-term evaluation will be at the end of Fall semester, the final evaluation at the end of Spring semester, and the 3 academic credits for contextual education are registered for and attributed to the Spring.

Field Education Checklist

- _____ Discussed field education plans with contextual education advisor
- _____ Submitted Contextual Education Proposal Form
- _____ Received permission
- _____ Registered for credit (timing depends on single semester or year-long programs)
- _____ Submitted final Contextual Education Proposal Form in first two weeks
- _____ Provided site supervisor with midterm evaluation and return email address
- _____ Completed and submitted midterm self-evaluation
- _____ Confirmed contextual education advisor received supervisor midterm evaluation
- _____ Provided site supervisor with final evaluation and return email address
- _____ Completed and submitted final self-evaluation
- _____ Confirmed contextual education advisor received supervisor final evaluation

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) is intentionally designed to provide the participant with the direct, hands-on, clinical experience of providing spiritual care to patients, families, and staff members in the context of an interfaith setting. Primarily established in the healthcare field, CPE can also take place in prisons, jails, military, and an assortment of other locations. A cornerstone of CPE is the educational component involving peer group work, supervision, and reflecting on clinical encounters. In the process, students encounter personal challenges that become points of examination and insight into the competency of serving others. This is meant to be intensive work that promotes the development of pastoral identity and spiritual care. Integral to this formation is examining one's tradition and how the teachings inform your specific manifestation of care. Students are expected to identify, formulate, and articulate spiritual assessment and spiritual care from one's own tradition.

CPE programs are highly structured and accredited through the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE). An ACPE certified educator will guide individuals and the group through the action reflection action model using a group process and individual direction. Each CPE unit requires approximately 300 hours of clinical practice and 100 hours of educational activities. Students registering CPE units for academic credit through the IBS will receive 6 credits for each CPE unit, up to 6 credits/1 CPE unit. One unit of CPE fulfills the 3 contextual education credits required for an M.Div plus 3 additional contextual education credits. One CPE unit can be completed in a 10-12 week intensive summer program or through a longer period of time known as an "extended unit," as long as the student completes a full, single unit of CPE.

Below are ways to learn about ACPE accredited sites, locally or nationally, as you consider where you may want to participate in CPE education.

- Recommended: Attend the annual CPE day at GTU in October to hear from and speak with programs in the Bay Area.
- Association of Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE) – Accredited CPE Centers Directory <https://profile.acpe.edu/accreditedcpedirectory>
- If you are interested in doing CPE in a non-hospital setting, speak with your contextual education advisor.

Considerations for taking CPE

To become a board-certified chaplain through the Association of Professional Chaplains (APC), one must complete four (4) units of CPE. These units can be earned through a one-year paid residency or piece-meal through volunteer summer or extended units. While non-CPE contextual education units do not count toward CPE units for board certification, as of 06/08/2021, no more than 1 CPE unit completed for contextual education as described in the previous section above counts toward both board certification and contextual education. It is incumbent upon the student to verify this with APC. (See the BCCI FAQ on the APC website.)

Earning CPE Credit with IBS

Interested students should:

- Consider, in consultation with their contextual education advisor, if they are ready for the experience.
- Determine when, in the course of their studies, they can sustain the demands of CPE (during a particular semester for an extended unit or during the summer).
- Check all the information on CPE on the ACPE website.
- Attend the annual GTU CPE Fair in October, if in residence, or on-line, if available.
- Check the ACPE website for accredited locations as an alternative to above:
<https://profile.acpe.edu/accreditedcpedirectory>
- Apply for programs.
- Communicate with their contextual education advisor when they receive a CPE supervisor's acceptance letter and decide to enroll in that particular program.
- Register for “FE-3400 Advanced Field Study-CPE” course. This is a three (3) unit course. For the six (6) credits allowed toward a CPE unit: 1) register for the course twice in a single semester or 2) register for one course in each semester. Review this with your contextual education advisor.
- Reference the IBS catalog “Contextual Education Policy” and contact the IBS Registrar for details. For information and reduction in fees, see “Tuition & Fees” on the IBS website.
- Provide a copy of their CPE supervisor’s evaluation and CPE unit certificate to their contextual education advisor by the last day of the term.
- Please note that the academic calendar does not necessarily coincide with that of your CPE program. Should the CPE supervisor not be ready to write the final evaluation by the last week of a given term, the student may take one of the following options:
 - If the CPE unit will conclude within the three weeks subsequent to the end of term, you must submit a Petition for Incomplete and then submit the evaluation upon receipt.
 - If the CPE unit extends more broadly across two terms, you may opt to register for credit only in the latter term, OR;
 - Split the credit across the two terms. In this case, in order to process the credits at the end of the first semester, the CPE supervisor needs to provide either a midterm evaluation or an alternative statement about satisfactory work. The final evaluation can be presented in the second term.
- Discuss your CPE final evaluation at your next advising meeting.
- A standard 400-hour CPE unit is equivalent to 6 contextual education credits.

“10 Commandments for Applying to CPE” – Peter Yuichi Clark

The Rev. Peter Yuichi Clark graduated from the American Baptist Seminary of the West (GTU, Berkeley) and ran the chaplaincy center at UCSF Medical Center and UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital (San Francisco, CA) until his death in 2019.

1. Submitting an application does not guarantee that you will be interviewed.

While some centers can interview every applicant, many Bay Area centers simply do not have the time to interview everyone. Therefore, they tend to be more selective. For example, UCSF reads every application (usually 50 or so) and interview roughly half that number to make up a cohort of ~10 students.

2. ACPE centers will always ask you the same questions on the application.

They all use the same questions and the same responses can go to each site. Spend time on your responses to those questions; remember, you're trying to convince program that you'd be a good candidate to interview. Be as transparent as possible. The length of the essays combined should be 8-10 pages, single spaced.

3. Don't apply to just one center.

You need to hedge your bets and you also need to give yourself options, in case you interview at a center and you sense that it may not be a good “fit” for you or the center determines you're not a good fit for them.

4. It's a two-way street.

You will be asked questions to see if you fit. It's also your chance to figure out if the people interviewing you are people with whom you want to work. Do they have something you want to learn. Realize that the way the supervisor conducts the interview gives you some insight about her/his supervisory style. And if you leave the interview and you think to yourself, “It doesn't feel right,” that's valuable information. Use CPE day to ask questions like: What are the strengths or your center? How do you work with your students?

5. Make sure the center is Accredited (ACPE for example).

This provides you protection as a student and due process. ACPE accreditation assures you that your rights as a student will be respected and that there is a level of quality in the training program. The ACPE website also lists accredited sites: <https://profile.acpe.edu/accreditedcpedirectory>

6. How you dress for the interview communicates something about you.

Most CPE centers are housed in healthcare environments that expect professional attire. Dress up for the interview as though you could walk out of the interview and onto the floor of the hospital. This leaves a stronger impression. If taken into the program, you will receive more information about the centers' dress code standards.

7. It is and it isn't a job interview.

It is a job interview in that they want to see what kind of person you are and if you'll be a good fit for the program. You're trying to impress upon them that you would be a good student. In CPE, they want to know if you are a good student and if you are curious about yourself and how you provide good ministry. Do you have a sense of your weaknesses, your vulnerabilities, what you have left to learn, the things you know you don't do well. They want to know what you want to work on in CPE. It's an educational program; you likely will be asked about your strengths and weaknesses. The more you know about this, the more you sound open to learning.

8. Think about what you want to learn.

Have a sense of what your learning goals are. Use the ACP standards on their website to get an idea about how to formulate some learning goals in your mind. See section 3.11, Objectives and Outcomes of CPE. You don't have to have all of your goals figured out, one or two is helpful. This helps the educator figure out if they can teach you something.

9. A educator asks him or herself four questions (or a variation of these) about every person that is interviewed:

- a. **Can I trust you with the people I am supposed to serve, hospital patients, people in a homeless shelter, where ever the CPE training is taking place.** Do I feel like you would be a good person to have work with the people our institution serves? If yes, move onto the next question.
- b. **Is there something I feel like I can teach you?** Do I sense you are open to learning and the sorts of things you want to learn about are things I can teach you.
- c. **Will I enjoy being with you?** After all, I'm going to have to invest a lot of my time and energy in you just like you are going to have to invest time and energy in me. If it doesn't feel like a good match, then maybe it would be better if you found another educator to work with rather than me. It's subjective yet relevant.
- d. **How will this person fit into the larger group?** Educators like to create a diverse learning group. The reason is that students teach each other as well as, if not better, than the educator teaches. A long-held axiom goes that: the patients are the best teachers, then your peers, and then the educator is somewhere down in the bottom. Diversity in all regards is considered. This includes learning styles of the students. It's an inexact art.

10. Students need to ask themselves four questions as well:

- a. **Is this a place I'd like to work and do my ministry?**
- b. **Does this educator seem to know something I need or want to learn?** If you don't think your going to learn anything from this person then, again, it's not a good investment of your time.
- c. **Will I enjoy being with this supervisor?** If you feel this person is a jerk or isn't listening to me or doesn't seem to take seriously what I have to say, those are good pieces of information for you to stay away from that person.
- d. **Am I ready for what this opportunity has to offer me?** That's a big hard question to ask. Some people get into CPE without giving enough consideration about how much it demands. In most CPE centers you have to do on-call, you have long hours, you're on full time, you don't get paid much if you get paid at all, you're having to see lots and lots of patients, you're having to do homework, read, it's demanding, very demanding. If you have a family, your family has to be willing to make a sacrifice just like you're making a sacrifice. Have a good conversation with your advisor about this. This is an immersive experience. There's nothing about self-care in the CPE learnings and objectives. Self-care is your responsibility and your educator will likely talk to you about it.

11. (Bonus Commandment) A "no" can sometimes be a "yes."

You may have your heart set on going to a particular center and you apply and you interview and they say, "no." It can be very heartbreaking. At the same time, almost every person who I've (Peter) met who has been told no by one place and yes by another, has said, "Oh, this has been a really good fit for me. I'm really glad I got to go to *this* center." CPE works well just about anywhere. If you're open to learning, you can be open to learning anywhere. You should still be selective and open to where the universe leads you to be.

Clinical Pastoral Education Checklist

- _____ Researched accredited CPE centers
- _____ Submitted application
- _____ Conducted interview
- _____ Informed IBS of acceptance
- _____ Registered for credit
- _____ Submitted copy of CPE mid-term evaluation
- _____ Submitted copy of CPE final evaluation

Expectations of the Contextual Education Student

Students are expected to self-initiate and give their contextual education participation and placement thoughtful consideration. Students should read through the contextual education handbook and relevant material in the IBS catalog. After this is done, students are expected to meet with their contextual education advisor to share thoughts and ideas about CE participation and when might be an appropriate time and placement. Filling out of all the forms needed and in a timely manner is solely the responsibility of the student. This includes articulating the nature of the work to be done, the formulation of goals, the adjustment of goals, midterm and final self-evaluations, and assuring the fulfillment of supervisor evaluations. As in any professional environment, students are expected to behave in a professional manner when engaging their responsibilities and relationships within contextual education.

This will include:

- Ownership and embodiment of goals from their infancy, through their evolution, and to their conclusion
- Cultivating a mutually beneficial relationship with site supervisor and co-workers, soliciting and engaging in constructive feedback
- Adhering to professional standards of confidentiality
- Adhering to professional and personal boundaries
- Engaging in constructive criticism and encouragement with maturity and integrity
- Identifying, articulating, and engaging in self-care practices
- Communicating to your contextual education advisor about concerns in the workplace and appropriate responses

Institutional Policies

Students and the sites they serve are bound by the policies outlined in the IBS catalog. These standards should be reviewed by all students. We are dedicated to the safety and support of our students and all our relationships are guided by these policies as well. While we are confident in the professionalism and mutual respect engendered in our relationships, these policies are our commitment in the rare instance of unprofessionalism.

Recommended Resources

Trust, Realization, and the Self in Soto Zen Practice, Daijaku Kinst (Institute of Buddhist Studies and BDK America, Inc., 2015)

The Arts of Contemplative Care: Pioneering Voices in Buddhist Chaplaincy and Pastoral Work, Cheryl Giles and Wilma Miller (Wisdom Publications, 2012)

Benefit Beings! The Buddhist Guide to Professional Chaplaincy, Danny Fischer (Off the Cushion Books, 2013)

A Thousand Hands: A Guidebook to Caring for Your Buddhist Community, Nathan Jishin Michon and Danial Clarkson Fisher (Sumeru Press, 2016)

Websites

Clinical Pastoral Education and Chaplaincy Association of Clinical Pastoral Education

Association of Professional Chaplains

Forum on the Military Chaplaincy

Military Chaplains Association

Chaplaincy Innovation Lab