

Dharma Studies Course Self-Assessment Year 3

The purpose of this self-assessment is to provide an opportunity for you to think about your own Buddhist study and practice. You are welcome to discuss them with Thay, a Dharma teacher, or a senior student if you like. And if there is an area of particular weakness that you identify, you are encouraged to discuss it with someone who can help you.

As you read through each section, you might like to contemplate the question and what it means to you. You might also like to jot down some notes, or write a few sentences.

1. Below are some key Buddhist concepts that are expected to be learned in this class. How is your progress in learning them? Would you be able to write about them? Would you be able to explain them to someone who knows nothing about Buddhism? What questions remain for you? How has your understanding evolved since you first heard the term? What have you learned that is not listed here? What grade would you give yourself in learning these concepts?

- a. 4 Noble Truths
- b. Noble 8-fold Path
- c. Emptiness
- d. Dharma
- e. 3 Dharma seals
- f. Inter-dependent origination
- g. Karma
- h. Buddha
- i. Bodhisattva
- j. Bodhicitta
- k. Precepts
- l. 5 skandas
- m. Samsara
- n. Nirvana
- o. Rebirth
- p. 4 immeasurables/4 Bhrahmaviharas
- q. 3 root defilements/3 poisons
- r. 5 hindrances
- s. Attachment
- t. 7 factors of awakening
- u. consciousness
- v. merit
- w. buddhnature
- x. wisdom
- y. two truths
- z. interpenetration
- aa. meditation
- bb. mindfulness
- cc. upaya

2. Below is some fundamental content that should be learned in this class. How well acquainted are you with these topics? If there are things you don't know, where would you look to learn more? What have you learned that is not listed here? What grade would you give yourself in knowing this information?

- a. The life of the Buddha

- b. The 3 vehicles
- c. Theravada canon
- d. Mahayana canon
- e. The spread of Buddhism across the globe
- f. Original disciples of the Buddha
- g. Great historical masters
- h. Important sutras, their place in the canon, their history, and their central teaching
- i. Influential schools of Buddhism

3. How is your progress in working with the 6 paramitas? What grade would you give yourself in your dedication to practicing these paramitas?

- a. Generosity
- b. Virtue
- c. Patience
- d. Effort
- e. Concentration
- f. Wisdom

4. Spiritual practice can be very personal. We each have our own practices. How is your progress with yours? What obstacles are you encountering? What practice would you like to deepen? What practices do you work with that are not listed here? What grade would you give yourself for engaging in these practices?

- a. Sitting meditation
- b. Walking meditation
- c. Sutra recitation
- d. Noble silence
- e. Precepts
- f. Mindfulness in everyday life
- g. Deep listening
- h. Mindful speech
- i. Vegetarianism

5. Some of us enjoy devotional practices. Do you engage in any of these? What is your understanding of the role of devotion in practice?

- j. Chanting liturgy
- k. Recollecting the name of the Buddha
- l. Prostrations
- m. Making offerings

6. Our practice is nourished by sustained effort and support from spiritual friends. Do you regularly practice with a group outside of class? Do you attend retreats? Listen to recorded Dharma teachings? If so, is it helpful? How? If you don't practice outside of class, why not? What grade would you give yourself for pursuing a practice outside of class?

7. There are certain forms that are important for harmonious practice with others. How comfortable are you with these forms? What would you need to do to become more comfortable with them? What forms have you learned that are not listed here? What grade would you give yourself in performing these forms?

- a. Bellmaster
- b. Mokugyo master

- c. Bowing
- d. Prostrations
- e. Giving a Dharma talk
- f. Making the incense offering
- g. Giving a meal blessing
- h. Appropriate interaction with monastics

8. How is your relationship with Thay? How could you benefit more from his presence and his teaching?

9. Have you contemplated the value of committing to a spiritual teacher? Have you identified and aligned yourself with a teacher?

10. How is your relationship with the class? Do you get from the class what you need? Do you contribute to the class in a meaningful way? How might you be a better citizen in the class?

11. How is your relationship with your community? Do you spend time in service? How might you be a better citizen of your community?

12. What are the perceptions that other people have of you and your practice? In your family, your workplace, the communities you interact with? Have they changed over time?

13. Have the teachings or the practice transformed you in any way? Has the class? If so, how? If not, why not?