Buddhist Studies

The Berkeley Group in Buddhist Studies offers an interdisciplinary program of study and research leading to a PhD degree in Buddhist Studies. The group, which cooperates closely with the Departments of South and Southeast Asian Studies (SSEAS) and East Asian Languages and Cultures (EALC), emphasizes the study of Buddhism in its many forms within its Asian historical and cultural context.

The Group emphasizes the study of Buddhist texts in their original languages, as well as the appreciation of the historical, social, and cultural milieus from which the Buddhist textual legacy emerged. At the same time, students in the PhD program are encouraged to broaden and deepen their understanding of Buddhist phenomena by incorporating archaeological, ethnographic, and visual materials and perspectives.

The goal of our program is not only to provide students with the linguistic, methodological, and conceptual skills to produce significant new research on Buddhist phenomena but also to have students bring their research into dialogue with ongoing issues and concerns in the humanities writ large.

The PhD program in Buddhist Studies is designed for students who intend to become scholars and teachers at the university level.

Admission to the University

Minimum Requirements for Admission

The following minimum requirements apply to all graduate programs and will be verified by the Graduate Division:

1. A bachelor’s degree or recognized equivalent from an accredited institution;
2. A grade point average of B or better (3.0);
3. If the applicant comes from a country or political entity (e.g., Quebec) where English is not the official language, adequate proficiency in English to do graduate work, as evidenced by a TOEFL score of at least 90 on the iBT test, 570 on the paper-and-pencil test, or an IELTS Band score of at least 7 on a 9-point scale (note that individual programs may set higher levels for any of these); and
4. Sufficient undergraduate training to do graduate work in the given field.

Applicants Who Already Hold a Graduate Degree

The Graduate Council views academic degrees not as vocational training certificates, but as evidence of broad training in research methods, independent study, and articulation of learning. Therefore, applicants who already have academic graduate degrees should be able to pursue new subject matter at an advanced level without the need to enroll in a related or similar graduate program.

Programs may consider students for an additional academic master’s or professional master’s degree only if the additional degree is in a distinctly different field.

Applicants admitted to a doctoral program that requires a master’s degree to be earned at Berkeley as a prerequisite (even though the applicant already has a master’s degree from another institution in the same or a closely allied field of study) will be permitted to undertake the second master’s degree, despite the overlap in field.

The Graduate Division will admit students for a second doctoral degree only if they meet the following guidelines:

1. Applicants with doctoral degrees may be admitted for an additional doctoral degree only if that degree program is in a general area of knowledge distinctly different from the field in which they earned their original degree. For example, a physics PhD could be admitted to a doctoral degree program in music or history; however, a student with a doctoral degree in mathematics would not be permitted to add a PhD in statistics.
2. Applicants who hold the PhD degree may be admitted to a professional doctorate or professional master’s degree program if there is no duplication of training involved.

Applicants may apply only to one single degree program or one concurrent degree program per admission cycle.

Required Documents for Applications

1. Transcripts: Applicants may upload unofficial transcripts with your application for the departmental initial review. If the applicant is admitted, then official transcripts of all college-level work will be required. Official transcripts must be in sealed envelopes as issued by the school(s) attended. If you have attended Berkeley, upload your unofficial transcript with your application for the departmental initial review. If you are admitted, an official transcript with evidence of degree conferral will not be required.
2. Letters of recommendation: Applicants may request online letters of recommendation through the online application system. Hard copies of recommendation letters must be sent directly to the program, not the Graduate Division.
3. Evidence of English language proficiency: All applicants from countries or political entities in which the official language is not English are required to submit official evidence of English language proficiency. This applies to applicants from Bangladesh, Burma, Nepal, India, Pakistan, Latin America, the People’s Republic of China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia, most European countries, and Quebec (Canada). However, applicants who, at the time of application, have already completed at least one year of full-time academic course work with grades of B or better at a US university may submit an official transcript from the US university to fulfill this requirement. The following courses will not fulfill this requirement:
   • courses in English as a Second Language,
   • courses conducted in a language other than English,
   • courses that will be completed after the application is submitted, and
   • courses of a non-academic nature.

If applicants have previously been denied admission to Berkeley on the basis of their English language proficiency, they must submit new test scores that meet the current minimum from one of the standardized tests. Official TOEFL score reports must be sent directly from Educational Test Services (ETS). The institution code for Berkeley is 4833. Official IELTS score reports must be mailed directly to our office from the British Council. TOEFL and IELTS score reports are only valid for two years.

Where to Apply

Visit the Berkeley Graduate Division application page (http://grad.berkeley.edu/admissions/apply).
Admission to the Program

Students wishing to enter the PhD program must have a master’s degree in a relevant field, typically East Asian, South Asian, or Southeast Asian studies. A master’s degree in religion is deemed relevant only if it includes significant training in an Asian language relevant to their intended area of research at the time of admission.

Applications are reviewed and ranked by the Buddhist Studies Admissions Committee in consultation with members of the Group in Buddhist Studies. The committee makes its selection on the basis of all the application materials—the transcripts, personal statement, letters of recommendation, writing sample, GRE scores, and so on. We play close attention to evidence of linguistic proficiency, knowledge of the field, writing skills, initiative, and potential for scholarly growth. We also consider whether or not the applicant’s academic goals can be met by the group’s faculty and program structure. Those chosen are recommended to the Graduate Division, which sets the number of students the group can admit, makes a final review of the applications, and issues an official letter of admission to the student. The number of students the group can admit is usually very small and admission is highly competitive.

Students thinking of applying to the PhD program are strongly encouraged to visit the Berkeley campus and meet the Buddhist Studies faculty and students prior to submitting their application. Students should contact the Graduate Adviser in advance of their visit for help in setting up faculty appointments and arranging to visit a seminar.

The Graduate Application and supporting documents are submitted electronically: the online application (http://www.grad.berkeley.edu/admissions/grad_app.shtml) becomes available in September for admission effective the following year. See the Graduate Division (http://www.berkeley.edu/prospective) website for details. All applicants must use the online application.

Transcripts. Applicants will submit unofficial transcripts, GRE scores, and other admissions materials on-line as part of the application. Admitted students will be required to submit two copies of all official transcripts in envelopes sealed by the issuing institutions at a later date.

Letters of Recommendation. Three letters of recommendation are required. As part of the application you will have to submit the names and contact information for the letter writers. Letters in languages other than English must be translated into English, but the original letter, in the original language, must be included. The department recommends that letters of recommendation come from faculty members who can comment on the applicant’s intellectual capacity, analytical skills, ability to write English, and general aptitude for scholarly work. Letters from nonacademic referees are rarely helpful. All letters must be submitted online by the recommenders no later than two weeks after the application deadline to ensure that they are included in the review process.

Academic Writing Sample. A writing sample in English must be included with the on-line application. This writing sample is intended to gauge an applicant’s academic writing ability, and should be a paper that the student feels best represents the quality of his/her work. An ideal writing sample will be around 20 pages on a topic related to East Asian studies, but a paper on another topic or of a different length may be acceptable.

GRE Test Scores. All applicants are required to take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). Only scores from the past five years are acceptable. Applicants should plan to take the GRE General Exam well before the application deadline. To send an official score to Berkeley be sure to list the institutional code for Berkeley (4833).

Applicants from Abroad. International applicants are urged to examine closely the requirements for certification and translation of records and TOEFL requirements provided in the Graduate Application and the information on legal residency and fees.

Application to Degree Programs

For admission to the graduate program, applicants must have completed an MA in one of the appropriate Asian languages or have equivalent language preparation. Prospective applicants without an MA or the equivalent may wish to apply to the Group in Asian Studies (http://ias.berkeley.edu/gas) or to the Department of South and Southeast Asian Studies (http://sas.berkeley.edu/dept/sseas).

Normative Time Requirements

Normative time to advancement: The total normative time to advancement is five years.

Normative time in candidacy: The total time in candidacy is two years.

Total normative time: The total normative time of the program is seven years.

Curriculum

Buddhist Studies

Buddhist Art History

Chosen regional breadth field

Chosen disciplinary field

Coursework

A minimum of eight graduate seminars or upper division courses are required, all of which are chosen in consultation with the academic adviser. At least one seminar must be taken in the field of Buddhist art history. In addition, at least one seminar must be taken in each of the two cognate fields (see under Qualifying Exams). The art history course requirement can simultaneously fulfill the course requirement for the cognate disciplinary field in the event that said field is Art History.

All precandidates are required to enroll for 1 unit in the Buddhist Studies proseminar (Buddhist Studies 200) each term they are registered, provided that the seminar is being offered. This seminar does not count toward the eight-course requirement. This seminar focuses on recent scholarship in the field, particularly interdisciplinary and cross-regional scholarship. It involves all Buddhist Studies faculty and students, and typically meets four times or so each semester.

All courses taken to fulfill the degree requirements, including the art history seminar, seminars taken to fulfill cognate field requirements, and the Buddhist Studies proseminar, must be taken for a letter grade.

Language Study

An advanced facility in at least two Asian languages is considered a fundamental component of the PhD program in Buddhist Studies at Berkeley, but it is not an end in and of itself. Students are required to master the range of classical and modern languages required to pursue advanced research in their chosen field. Each student selects a primary language area. Determination of which additional languages are necessary for the student’s course of study, and the procedures for the evaluation of proficiency in those languages, is determined by the
mentoring committee in accordance with Graduate Division regulations. The following table is provided as a guideline.

- **Chinese**: Classical and modern Chinese, as well as modern Japanese (as a research language), and a modern European research language (typically French).
- **Japanese**: Classical (Bungo) and modern Japanese, as well as Classical Chinese/Kanbun, and a modern European research language.
- **Newari**: Sanskrit and a modern research language.
- **Pali**: Sanskrit and a modern research language (Sinhala or a Southeast Asian language recommended).
- **Sanskrit**: Literary Tibetan and/or Classical Chinese, and a modern research language (Japanese, German, or French).
- **Tibetan**: Sanskrit and/or Classical Chinese, as well as a modern research language (modern Chinese, Japanese, German, or French).
- **Southeast Asian Languages**: Sanskrit and Pali, as well as a modern research language.

### Annual Review

The mentoring committee conducts an annual review of the student's academic performance and progress toward the degree in the spring of each year, before the end of the spring term (see F4.2 of the Graduate Studies Handbook). Students should fill out the Graduate Division annual review form and provide the mentoring committee with all seminar papers written that year, as well as any other documentation deemed pertinent and requested by the committee. Should a student's performance be considered unsatisfactory, following consultation with the head graduate advisor and director of the program, the student will be placed on probation for one year and given the opportunity to improve his or her performance. If a student's performance is still considered unsatisfactory at the end of the probationary year, the student will be dismissed from the program.

### Qualifying Examination and Dissertation Prospectus

F3.3 of the Graduate Studies Handbook states: "The intent of the qualifying examination is to ascertain the breadth of the student's comprehension of fundamental facts and principles that apply in their major fields of study and whether the student has the ability to think incisively and critically about the theoretical and the practical aspects of these fields."

The qualifying examination process consists of five stages: (1) constituting the qualifying examination committee and convening the qualifying examination colloquium, (2) taking the written examination in the Cognate Regional Field, (3) taking the written examination in the Cognate Disciplinary Field, (4) submission of the dissertation prospectus, (5) the qualifying oral examination.

### Qualifying Examination Committee and Colloquium

The qualifying examination process in Buddhist Studies begins with a colloquium in which the student meets with his or her qualifying examination committee. This committee consists of four persons, namely the two or three members of the mentoring committee and one or two additional members selected for their expertise in the cognate fields. Three members of the examination committee must be members of the Group in Buddhist Studies. (See Graduate Studies Handbook F3.3 and F5.7 for further regulations governing membership on the Committee.) The colloquium is an opportunity to discuss the academic fields, content, structure, and timing of the exams.

### The Cognate Exams

The cognate exams consist of two written take-home examinations—one in each of the two "cognate fields."

1. **Cognate Regional Field**: this exam is intended to reinforce the breadth of knowledge in the Buddhist traditions of Asia. Students of East Asian Buddhism will normally do this in the areas of South and/or Southeast Asian Buddhism, and vice versa.
2. **Cognate Disciplinary Field**: this exam focuses on the student's primary region of study, but in a disciplinary field outside that of Buddhist Studies. Appropriate cognate disciplines include anthropology, art history, history, literature, philosophy, and so on. Thus a student of Chinese Buddhism might select Chinese art history, a student of Tibetan Buddhism might select the anthropology of Tibet, and so on.

Preparation for these exams should begin early in the student's coursework. In consultation with the mentoring committee, the students will select their two cognate areas and take at least one upper division course or graduate seminar in each area. Preparation for the qualifying exam continues with supplementary readings based on a bibliography prepared by the student in conjunction with the qualifying examination committee. This committee is responsible for setting the exam questions for the cognate written exams. The student is given 24 hours to write on a total of three questions for each exam. Each of the written exams is evaluated by all members of the examination committee.

### Dissertation Prospectus

The prospectus should begin with a general review of the scholarship in the field and situate the thesis within that field. It should clearly articulate the thesis and program of research, identifying the available source material to be consulted. In framing their subject matter and thesis, students are expected to demonstrate their ability to synthesize philological, historical, and theoretical perspectives. The prospectus must include a chapter outline and a full bibliography of primary and secondary sources.

### Oral Qualifying Exam

The oral examination will occur shortly after the submission of the dissertation prospectus. It will focus on the content of the written cognate exams, the basic literature in the student's primary field, as well as the content and cogency of the prospectus.

### Timing

The first written cognate exam is held no more than two months following the preparatory exam colloquium, and the second cognate exam is normally taken no more than two months after the first. The dissertation prospectus is normally submitted no more than two months following the second written exam. The oral exam is scheduled within two weeks of the submission of the dissertation prospectus. The entire process of qualifying cognate exams, prospectus, and oral should take about six months and should be completed by the end of the sixth term in the program.

### Teaching Experience

Teaching experience is central to a student's intellectual and professional formation and critical for success on the job market. Every student in the Buddhist Studies program is expected to serve as a graduate student instructor for a minimum of two semesters during the course of their studies.

### Constitution of the Dissertation Committee
The dissertation committee, consisting of three faculty members, is formed immediately following advancement to candidacy, following provisions set forth in the Graduate Studies Handbook F5.7ff.

**Dissertation Defense**

All dissertations in the Buddhist Studies program must be defended orally, following “Plan A” outlined in the Graduate Studies Handbook F3.8. The defense committee consists of five members, namely the existing three-member dissertation committee and two additional members. The defense must be scheduled for no less than two hours and must be open to the public.

**Buddhist Studies**

Expand all course descriptions [+ ] Collapse all course descriptions [- ]

**BUDDSTD 200 Proseminar in Buddhist Studies 1 Unit**

Terms offered: Spring 2020, Fall 2019, Spring 2019

This seminar provides an opportunity for all students and faculty in the Group in Buddhist Studies to gather together on a regular basis to discuss recent theoretically significant works in the field of Buddhist Studies, as well as pertinent and important works in related disciplines (anthropology, art history, literature, history, philosophy, and religious studies). The content of the course will be adjusted from semester to semester so as to best accommodate the needs and interest of the students, but the focus will be on recent works representing the “state of the field.”

Proseminar in Buddhist Studies: Read More [+]

**Rules & Requirements**

**Prerequisites:** Graduate standing in the Buddhist Studies Ph.D. program or consent of instructor

**Repeat rules:** Course may be repeated for credit when topic changes.

**Hours & Format**

**Fall and/or spring:** 5 weeks - 3 hours of seminar per week

**Additional Details**

**Subject/Course Level:** Buddhist Studies/Graduate

**Grading:** Letter grade.

Proseminar in Buddhist Studies: Read Less [-]
BUDDSTD C215 Readings in Indian Buddhist Texts 2 - 4 Units
Terms offered: Spring 2020, Fall 2019, Spring 2019, Fall 2018
This graduate seminar focuses on reading a wide spectrum of Indian Buddhist texts in the Sanskrit (or Pali) original introducing the students to different genres, and different aspects of Indian Buddhism. The students taking the course for two units (rather than four) will be expected to prepare thoroughly every week for the reading of Buddhist texts in the original. They will also be expected to read all related secondary literature that is assigned to supplement the study of the primary source material. In contrast to the students taking the course for four units, they will not be expected to write a term paper or to prepare special presentations for class.

Readings in Indian Buddhist Texts: Read More [+]

Rules & Requirements

Credit Restrictions: Students will receive no credit for South Asian C215/Group in Buddhist Studies C215 after completing South Asian 215A, or South Asian C215A/Group in Buddhist Studies C215A.

Repeat rules: Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3-3 hours of seminar per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Buddhist Studies/Graduate
Grading: Letter grade.
Instructor: Rospatt
Formerly known as: South Asian C215A/Group in Buddhist Studies C215A
Also listed as: S ASIAN C215

Readings in Indian Buddhist Texts: Read Less [-]

BUDDSTD C220 Seminar in Buddhism and Buddhist Texts 2 or 4 Units
Terms offered: Fall 2019, Spring 2019, Fall 2016, Fall 2014
Content varies with student interests. The course will normally focus on classical Buddhist texts that exist in multiple recensions and languages, including Chinese, Sanskrit, and Tibetan.

Seminar in Buddhism and Buddhist Texts: Read More [+]

Rules & Requirements

Repeat rules: Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3-3 hours of seminar per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Buddhist Studies/Graduate
Grading: Letter grade.
Also listed as: EA LANG C220/S, SEASN C220

Seminar in Buddhism and Buddhist Texts: Read Less [-]

BUDDSTD C223 Readings in Chinese Buddhist Texts 2 or 4 Units
Terms offered: Spring 2020, Fall 2019, Spring 2019
This seminar is an intensive introduction to various genres of Buddhist literature in classical Chinese, including translations of Sanskrit and Central Asian scriptures. Chinese commentaries, philosophical treatises, hagiographies, and sectarian works. It is intended for graduate students who already have some facility in classical Chinese. It will also serve as a tools and methods course, covering the basic reference works and secondary scholarship in the field of East Asian Buddhism. The content of the course will be adjusted from semester to semester to best accommodate the needs and interests of students.

Readings in Chinese Buddhist Texts: Read More [+]

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Consent of instructor
Repeat rules: Course may be repeated for credit when topic changes.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3-3 hours of seminar per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Buddhist Studies/Graduate
Grading: Letter grade.
Also listed as: CHINESE C223

Readings in Chinese Buddhist Texts: Read Less [-]
BUDDSTD C224 Readings in Tibetan Buddhist Texts 2 or 4 Units
Terms offered: Spring 2020, Fall 2019, Spring 2019, Spring 2018
This seminar provides an introduction to a broad range of Tibetan Buddhist texts, including chronicles and histories, biographical literature, doctrinal treatises, canonical texts, ritual manuals, pilgrimage guides, and liturgical texts. It is intended for graduate students interested in premodern Tibet from any perspective. Students are required to do all of the readings in the original classical Tibetan. It will also serve as a tools and methods course for the study of Tibetan Buddhist literature, including standard lexical and bibliographic references, digital resources, and secondary literature in modern languages. The content of the course will vary from semester to semester to account for the needs and interests of particular students.
Readings in Tibetan Buddhist Texts: Read More [+]

Rules & Requirements
Prerequisites: Consent of instructor
Credit Restrictions: Students who have passed S ASIAN C224 will not get credit for SASIAN C224

Hours & Format
Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3-3 hours of seminar per week

Additional Details
Subject/Course Level: Buddhist Studies/Graduate
Grading: Letter grade.
Instructor: Dalton
Also listed as: SASIAN C224/TIBETAN C224

BUDDSTD C225 Readings in Japanese Buddhist Texts 2 or 4 Units
Terms offered: Spring 2019, Fall 2017, Fall 2014
This seminar serves as an introduction to a broad range of Japanese Buddhist literature belonging to different historical periods and genres, including liturgical texts; monastic records, rules, and ritual manuals; doctrinal treatises; biographies of monks; and histories of Buddhism in Japan. Students are required to do all the readings in the original languages, which are classical Chinese (Kanbun) and classical Japanese. It will also serve as a tools and methods course, covering basic reference works and secondary scholarship in the field of Japanese Buddhism. The content of the course will be adjusted from semester to semester to accommodate the needs and interests of the students.
Readings in Japanese Buddhist Texts: Read More [+]

Rules & Requirements
Prerequisites: Consent of instructor
Repeat rules: Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

Hours & Format
Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3-3 hours of seminar per week

Additional Details
Subject/Course Level: Buddhist Studies/Graduate
Grading: Letter grade.
Also listed as: JAPAN C225

BUDDSTD 250 Art and Archaeology of Buddhism 2 or 4 Units
Terms offered: Fall 2017, Spring 2015
This seminar offers a multidisciplinary approach to the origins, development, and diffusion of Buddhist art and archaeology in South, Central and Southeast Asia. Seminar content will vary from year to year depending on faculty and graduate student research interests. Topics may include the early archaeological and numismatic record, aniconic and figurative depictions of the Buddha and Buddhist deities, painted and sculpted narratives, studies of particular sites such as Polunaruva and Angkor, the caves of the Western Deccan, Buddhist Monasteries in the Himalayan region, and so on.
Art and Archaeology of Buddhism: Read More [+]

Rules & Requirements
Repeat rules: Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

Hours & Format
Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3-3 hours of seminar per week

Additional Details
Subject/Course Level: Buddhist Studies/Graduate
Grading: Letter grade.
Art and Archaeology of Buddhism: Read Less [-]
BUDDSTD 298 Directed Study for Graduate Students 1 - 8 Units
Terms offered: Fall 2019, Spring 2016, Fall 2015
Special tutorial or seminar on selected topics not covered by available courses or seminars.
Directed Study for Graduate Students: Read More [+]
Rules & Requirements
Repeat rules: Course may be repeated for credit when topic changes.

Hours & Format
Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 1-8 hours of independent study per week
Summer: 6 weeks - 2.5-20 hours of independent study per week
8 weeks - 1.5-15 hours of independent study per week

Additional Details
Subject/Course Level: Buddhist Studies/Graduate
Grading: Letter grade.
Directed Study for Graduate Students: Read Less [-]

BUDDSTD 299 Thesis Preparation and Related Research 1 - 8 Units
Terms offered: Spring 2016, Fall 2015, Spring 2015
Thesis Preparation and Related Research: Read More [+]
Rules & Requirements
Prerequisites: Consent of thesis supervisor and graduate adviser
Repeat rules: Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

Hours & Format
Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 1-8 hours of independent study per week

Additional Details
Subject/Course Level: Buddhist Studies/Graduate
Grading: Offered for satisfactory/unsatisfactory grade only.
Thesis Preparation and Related Research: Read Less [-]

BUDDSTD 601 Individual Study for Master's Students 1 - 8 Units
Terms offered: Spring 2016, Fall 2015, Spring 2015
Individual study for the comprehensive or language requirements in consultation with the graduate adviser. Units may not be used to meet either unit or residence requirements for a master's degree.
Individual Study for Master's Students: Read More [+]
Rules & Requirements
Prerequisites: Consent of graduate adviser
Repeat rules: Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

Hours & Format
Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 1-8 hours of independent study per week

Additional Details
Subject/Course Level: Buddhist Studies/Graduate examination preparation
Grading: Offered for satisfactory/unsatisfactory grade only.
Individual Study for Master's Students: Read Less [-]

BUDDSTD 602 Individual Study for Doctoral Students 1 - 8 Units
Terms offered: Spring 2016, Fall 2015, Spring 2015
Individual study in consultation with the major field adviser, intended to provide an opportunity for qualified students to prepare for various examinations required of candidates for the Ph.D.
Individual Study for Doctoral Students: Read More [+]
Rules & Requirements
Repeat rules: Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

Hours & Format
Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 1-8 hours of independent study per week

Additional Details
Subject/Course Level: Buddhist Studies/Graduate examination preparation
Grading: Offered for satisfactory/unsatisfactory grade only.
Individual Study for Doctoral Students: Read Less [-]