

FPMT Education Services

FPMT Education Services is the education department of FPMT International Office and develops study programs, practice materials, translations and trainings designed to foster an integration of four broad education areas: study, practice, service and behavior. These programs and materials are available through the FPMT Foundation Store, the FPMT Online Learning Center and FPMT centers worldwide.

The Need for Qualified Teachers

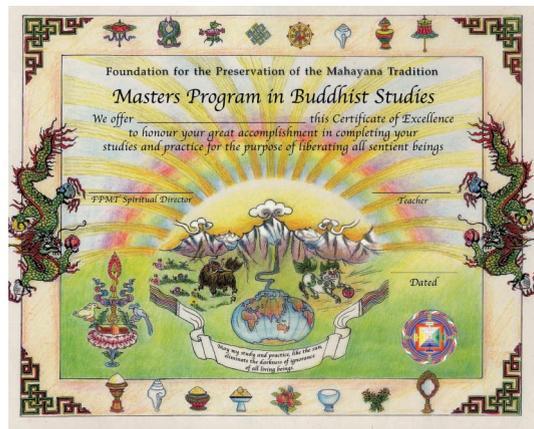
By FPMT Education Services and Center Services



Lama Zopa Rinpoche holding a text, Amitabha Buddhist Centre, Singapore, February 2010. Photo by Miss Seow.

There is an ever-expanding need for qualified teachers as interest in Buddhist study grows and the number of FPMT centers, projects, services and study groups increases. The personal benefit of completing a full course of study in any FPMT standard education program is incalculable. An enormous additional benefit comes to the graduate and their local center when he or she receives the completion certification for the program – because this fulfills one of the key prerequisites for becoming an FPMT registered teacher, itself a requirement to teach in a center or study group.

FPMT Education Services makes three certificate study programs available to students – *Discovering Buddhism*, *Basic Program* and *Masters Program* – **each designed in accordance with the guidance, wishes and advice of Lama Zopa Rinpoche**. By completing a program in full, students are directly fulfilling Rinpoche's wishes for education within FPMT. Acknowledging the need for registered teachers and understanding the rewards and benefits of teaching itself, we encourage all FPMT students to consider taking one of the standard FPMT education programs through to certification.



Clockwise from left: Basic Program graduates with Geshe Tashi Tsering, Chenrezig Institute, Australia, December 2007. Photo courtesy Chenrezig Institute.
Masters Program certificate, designed by Lama Zopa Rinpoche.
Masters Program students with Geshe Jampa Gyatso, Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa, Italy, June 2007. Photo courtesy Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa.

Discovering Buddhism

Designed as a two-year course, *Discovering Buddhism* (DB) offers students an experiential taste of and solid foundation in Buddha's teachings, retreat and practice methods and the skills needed to make life most meaningful. *Discovering Buddhism* is offered in many FPMT centers worldwide and is also available as a homestudy program (paper based) or as an online course (strictly electronic).

A handful of students have completed the DB program and received certificates, and many qualified teachers have received honorary certificates in recognition of their years of study.

Currently, there are 136 FPMT registered teachers who can teach *Discovering Buddhism*, providing students around the world with foundational instruction in Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism in the unique lineage of Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

Basic Program

The *Basic Program* (BP) is now a five-year comprehensive, practice-oriented program for students wishing to progress beyond introductory and foundational study and practice. The course covers 12 subject areas including: lam-rim, *Heart Sutra*, the six perfections, *lojong*, buddha-nature, mind and cognition,

philosophical tenets, *Ornament of Clear Realization* and *Seventy Topics*, and the four classes of tantra. In addition, the course requires observance of ethical conduct, a service or “karma yoga” commitment, and the successful completion of three months of lam-rim retreat in order to receive a completion certificate.

The *Basic Program* is currently hosted at 20 centers and is also available as a homestudy program and as an online program through Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa in Italy. To date, almost 80 students have graduated from the *Basic Program* and received certificates. Additionally, seven BP completion certificates for homestudy have been issued. There are 63 registered teachers who can teach *Basic Program*.

Masters Program

The *Masters Program* (MP) is FPMT’s most advanced study program. The seven-year, residential course is based on the traditional geshe studies at the great Gelug monastic universities. The program offers in-depth study of “the five great texts” and extensive retreat experience, providing a thorough grounding in sutra and tantra.

The second FPMT *Masters Program* is in its final year at Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa in Italy. The review and final exam will take place by the end of 2013. Students are already preparing for their one-year retreat, which will complete their studies and qualify them for graduation by the end of 2014. Nineteen students graduated from the first *Masters Program* held at the center.

Nalanda Monastery in France is preparing for their first *Masters Program* (the third such program in FPMT), due to start in September 2013.

At Chenrezig Institute in Australia, more than 20 Sangha and seven lay students started the MP-accredited course on *Madhyamakavatara* in June 2012.

Teaching Dharma: Preserving a Tradition

Students who complete *Discovering Buddhism*, *Basic Program* and *Masters Program* can contribute to the sustainability of these programs, the entire FPMT organization and the preservation of Dharma by becoming teachers themselves. Through integrating what they have learned, they are able to give others the tools to do the same.

Within FPMT, the label “teacher” indicates a person possessing several indispensable qualifications: academic success, solid meditation practice, an attitude of service, ethical behavior and loving kindness. Additionally, FPMT teachers have an appreciation of the organization’s history and unique teaching lineage, which helps build a sense of family and cohesion amongst their students.

Stories of Success, Struggle and Perseverance

The idea of beginning and completing an intensive study program can seem quite daunting, especially given the pressures and responsibilities of modern life. We asked a few students who have engaged with these programs to share why, despite obstacles and challenges, they felt persevering was the only option for them:

Stephanie Smith of Kadampa Center, North Carolina, United States, is in the final stages of completing *Discovering Buddhism* with the hope of teaching at her center. Due to the kindness of Geshe Gelek, Kadampa Center’s resident geshe, Stephanie had many of the *Discovering Buddhism* requirements completed prior to beginning the program. In 1999, she offered the top floor of her home to Geshe Gelek, who encouraged her to complete 111,111 Vajrasattva mantras, mandala offerings and prostrations. By the time *Discovering Buddhism* was established and the certification process in place, she was already well on her way to completing the requirements.

“I think I was only able to collect all the requirements because I didn’t know more were coming,” Stephanie reflected. “I just wanted to finish what Geshe-la had asked me to do at the time. I stayed totally focused on the 111,111 prostrations, for example. I may have been overwhelmed if I knew I had to do something else after that. But students now will have something I didn’t have: a group of other DB students to cheer and encourage each other in this process. And a finish line of sorts.

“I had no real expectations, just curiosity. But the results spurred me on, and by the time I completed each collection [of practices], I found myself wanting more. Being open to the surprises means one will see the surprises. I had the proof that what I was doing was changing my mind and my life, so I just kept putting one foot in front of the other. People seem to enjoy many of the stories I have of bombarding Geshe-la with my questions and my resistance. And these stories have made it possible for me to help others make sense of something they are struggling with. Our struggles can help others.”

Margo van Greta, coordinator of Togme Sangpo Study Group, Scotland, is close to completing the *Discovering Buddhism* certificate and looking forward to being able to teach. She shared that she knows something about juggling the many responsibilities that can often lead one off course, and yet she doesn’t give up.

“I do the study and assignments besides working a full-time job, serving as coordinator for Togme Sangpo Study Group and leading weekly meditation sessions,” Margo said. “In addition to that, I have my daily practice, including more study, following the advice that Lama Zopa Rinpoche has given me. Sometimes it feels like a lot! I persevere because I feel Rinpoche’s blessing. I also

see the enthusiasm of the small group who joins the meditation sessions. They seem sincerely interested, so I would love to provide more in-depth material.”

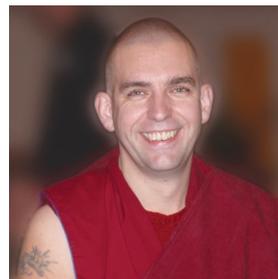
Steff Hill from Jamyang Buddhist Centre, London, had previously completed *Foundation of Buddhist Thought* with Geshe Tashi. She then decided to complete the *Discovering Buddhism* exams for certification as well, since she had already completed the other requirements. However, answering the questions required more reflection than she anticipated, and it took her a year to complete.

“Be realistic about your expectations of this type of program,” Steff suggested as a way to handle the challenges. “It takes time and commitment. These programs do not seem to be like others a person may engage with in life. The very nature of the process itself involves the potential for transformation. If someone is trying to do one alongside the commitments and responsibilities of daily life, then it seems almost inevitable that at some point or other, the act of studying the Buddhadharmā is going to bring a direct confrontation with why, and how, that person is doing it. This is what the teachings are about, and this is in itself a way of learning what the Buddha really taught. So yes, I would recommend aiming to complete a program like this. It’s a bit like a way to strengthen and deepen one’s refuge in the Three Jewels.”

Vens. Kerry Prest and Losang Gendun recently completed the *Basic Program* at Nalanda Monastery, France, and are now registered as In-Depth Buddhism teachers.

“There were a number of things that kept me going,” Ven. Kerry shared. “Being around others who were also struggling and available to talk about things helped and having time to relax and not stress because I didn’t know everything was crucial. But mostly it was due to the skillful guidance of Gen-la [Geshe Losang Jamphel] and his knowing when it was time to laugh, time to debate and time to go into so much complexity it made my head spin! But he was always pushing us away from ignorance.”

“In itself, living in Nalanda Monastery as a monk is a rather comfortable and enjoyable position, conducive to contentment in study and practice,” Ven. Gendun added. “So in that sense, obstacles mainly come from the mind. The subject that I found difficult to connect with was the fourth chapter of the *Ornament of Clear Realization* and to even remotely be able to relate it to anything practical. Interestingly enough, now that I’m teaching, I use the text rather often to exemplify how various practices and insights interconnect. So looking back at it, the fact that I made an effort to investigate the historical context of the text and its main points, next to an orthodox exposition of it, helped me integrate it in a personal way; it made it work for me. That is the value of perseverance, that whether or not it works out in the end as you might hope, it always rewards you with insight.”



Ven. Losang Gendun completed the Basic Program in 2012 at Nalanda Monastery, France

Swee Kim Ng receiving the Basic Program certificate from Lama Zopa Rinpoche, Amitabha Buddhist Centre, Singapore, February 2011. Photo by Ven. Thubten Kunsang.



Teachers for the Future

Lama Zopa Rinpoche consistently emphasizes that the motivation behind all of our actions should be our personal commitment to the path of the bodhisattva. “The best answer is to learn Dharma – and to meditate – especially how to develop wisdom and compassion towards other sentient beings,” Lama Zopa Rinpoche advised in November 2011. “We each have full responsibility to free all sentient beings from suffering and bring them to full enlightenment. Therefore, we need to achieve full enlightenment and so we need to practice Dharma. Therefore, we need a place where there is a teacher and facilities to practice. Now we can see how important the Dharma center is. We should know how fortunate and lucky we are having different Dharma centers with teachers.”

The preservation of the Dharma depends on qualified teachers, and FPMT is committed to providing study programs that keep the Mahayana teachings authentic and comprehensive. Our hope is that you too will be inspired to commit to completing an FPMT education program for your own benefit and because future students are relying on you!

You can learn more about the FPMT Education Services study programs available to you at www.fpmt.org/education/programs. Homestudy programs are available through the FPMT Foundation Store (shop.fpmt.org). The *Discovering Buddhism* online program can be found on the FPMT Online Learning Center (onlinelearning.fpmt.org).

You can see which FPMT centers have resident teachers at www.fpmt.org/teachers/resident.html.

Visit mandalamagazine.org to read Ven. George Churinoff’s reflection on the benefit of in-depth Buddhist study.

Foundation for Developing Compassion and Wisdom

The Foundation for Developing Compassion and Wisdom is an international project of the FPMT, established in 2005, to help all beings lead a happier, more peaceful and meaningful life. It achieves this through providing educational programs and projects rooted in Buddhist philosophy and psychology yet suitable for people of all cultures and traditions. This collection of programs and projects comprises Universal Education for Compassion and Wisdom.

Beyond Buddhism

By Foundation for Developing Compassion and Wisdom team

“So far, of the 21st century, just over a decade has gone: the major part of it is yet to come. It is my hope that this will be a century of peace, a century of dialogue – a century when a more caring, responsible, and compassionate humanity will emerge,” His Holiness the Dalai Lama, patron of Foundation for Developing Compassion and Wisdom (FDCW), shared in the conclusion to his book *Beyond Religion*, published in 2011 as the follow-up to *Ethics for the New Millennium*. Both books are seminal sources of inspiration for anyone involved with Universal Education for Compassion and Wisdom, which itself is a response to Lama Yeshe’s call to go “beyond Buddhism” and find new ways of sharing its message of compassion and wisdom with a wider audience of people from all traditions and cultures.

In taking forward this vision, the role that FDCW plays is largely a backroom one, providing resources, training and support for the community educators who are directly taking these teachings into everyday situations such as schools and colleges, hospices and prisons, the workplace and the home. We’re happy to announce that, under the direction of Lama Zopa Rinpoche, we are now working in partnership with senior students of FPMT on a new set of long-term training programs. These new programs will present the three topics of ethical behavior, how to develop a good heart, and the science of the mind. They will be offered alongside and in support of our inaugural program *16 Guidelines for a Happy Life* and the wonderful work of our associate projects: Creating Compassionate Cultures, Loving Kindness Peaceful Youth, Transformative Mindfulness and The Potential Project.

If you’d like regular updates on progress on these new training programs, please join our mailing list. You can sign up at www.compassionandwisdom.org. And we hope that everyone will join us in making prayers that these activities will help us fulfill all our teachers’ wishes to create a more caring, responsible and compassionate world.

