

MAITRIPA COLLEGE MASTER OF DIVINITY LOW-RESIDENCY PROGRAM GUIDE

Master of Divinity (Low-Residency) Degree

For cohorts beginning Fall 2026

Introduction

Vision, Mission, and Lineage of Maitripa College

Vision

To cultivate transformative leaders who embody Buddhist wisdom and compassion, integrating a good heart, tolerance, and joy in service to the world.

Mission

May Compassion and Wisdom Serve the World. Maitripa College, a Buddhist institution rooted in the Nalanda tradition, offers graduate and lifelong learning programs in both physical and digital formats. Through the integration of contemplative practice, Buddhist scholarship, academic methodologies, and spiritual formation—grounded in three pillars of scholarship, meditation, and service—we cultivate wisdom, compassion, and ethical responsibility. Our students are empowered to serve their communities and the world with love, compassion, joy and equanimity.

Lineage

Maitripa College is grounded in the living lineage of Tibetan Buddhism as transmitted through the Nalanda tradition of India and preserved and taught within the Tibetan Buddhist world. Founded by Yangsi Rinpoche and Lama Zopa Rinpoche, Maitripa College draws from centuries of scholarship, contemplative practice, and ethical formation passed down through authentic lineages. The College maintains close relationships with eminent Tibetan teachers and lineage holders, including His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and integrates traditional methods of study, debate, meditation, and service with contemporary academic inquiry. This lineage-based foundation ensures that Maitripa's programs are not only academically rigorous, but spiritually grounded—rooted in teachings that have been tested through generations of practice and dedicated to the cultivation of wisdom and compassion for the benefit of the world.

Purpose of the Low-Residency Model

Beginning Fall 2026, the Maitripa Master of Divinity (MDiv) degree is offered in a low-residency hybrid modality, expanding access for students while maintaining the depth and integrity of applied Tibetan Buddhist education in our world. This shift reflects the College's

Low-Residency Transformation Pathway, which re-aligns curriculum, governance, technology, assessment, and student support into a mission-centered, student-ready model.

The low-residency format is intentionally designed to:

- Preserve lineage-based contemplative formation
- Maintain rigorous academic standards
- Integrate online learning with in-person community practice
- Support working adults and students living beyond Portland, Oregon
- Meet accreditation standards for distance delivery

Program Overview: Low-Residency Structure

The low-residency Master of Divinity degree program includes:

- **Online asynchronous coursework** each semester
- **Synchronous sessions** for faculty-led discussions, meditation, and community learning
- **On-site residencies** (once or twice per academic year) focused on contemplative and spiritual formation, community building, and intensive coursework
- **Service, ministerial, and/or chaplaincy formation requirements**
- **A capstone or equivalent mastery demonstration**

Program Learning Design

Pillars of Education at Maitripa College

The MDiv is grounded in Maitripa's three-pillar model:

1. Scholarship – rigorous study of Buddhist philosophy and history through Tibetan and Euro-American academic methods
2. Meditation – cultivation of contemplative discipline on a path of spiritual growth
3. Service – applying dharma through compassionate action in the world

These pillars shape all courses and requirements.

Learning Modalities

- Asynchronous online learning: readings, discussion boards, recorded lectures, contemplative assignments, reflection essays, academic papers
- Synchronous online sessions: real-time class meetings guarantee regular and substantive interaction
- Residency learning: intensives in meditation, philosophy, ritual, service, interpersonal and communication skills, and community formation
- Self-paced Study and Practice: research, meditation retreat(s), service projects
- Capstone or practicum requirements

Technology Requirements

- Learning management system: **Populi**
- Video conferencing platform: **Zoom**

- Students are responsible for reliable internet, webcam, and audio equipment
- All tools must meet ADA/UDL accessibility requirements

Academic Structure and Policies

Academic Calendar

The low-residency Master of Divinity program follows the College’s academic calendar, with:

- Online coursework for three terms (fall, spring, summer) per year
- Required residency periods scheduled annually (twice yearly in Fall and Spring)
- The College observes Federal, State, and Tibetan Buddhist holidays, which are published annually in the academic calendar online
- The academic year begins in July and ends in June
- The detailed academic calendar for the 2026-27 Academic Year will be published in January, 2026

Credit-Hour and RSI Policy

- One credit = 45 hours of student engagement
- Online instructional time includes regular and substantive interaction (RSI) between faculty and students, as defined by federal guidelines
- Residency hours contribute to instructional time where appropriate

Enrollment and Completion Timelines

The Low-Residency Master of Divinity program at Maitripa College is structured around a cohort-based model in which students progress through the curriculum together. Students typically enroll in two to three courses per term. This shared rhythm of study supports continuity, mutual accountability, and the development of a sustained learning community across the duration of the program.

The Master of Divinity is designed as a four-year program, with students completing six to nine credits per term across three terms per year. Program sequencing, course availability, and degree milestones are intentionally aligned to support steady progress toward completion within these timeframes.

The cohort model is a foundational element of the pedagogy and is not optional. Learning at Maitripa College is understood as a relational and formative process that unfolds over time through shared inquiry, contemplative practice, and applied engagement. The cohort structure supports this approach by fostering deep intellectual dialogue, spiritual formation, and professional identity development within a consistent community of peers.

Satisfactory Academic Progress

Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) at Maitripa College is a measure of a student’s successful completion of coursework and steady advancement toward degree requirements. Students are expected to maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.0, complete courses within established timeframes, and demonstrate consistent engagement with academic, contemplative, and applied components of the program. Academic progress is reviewed at regular intervals to

ensure students are meeting program standards and learning outcomes. Students who do not meet SAP requirements may be placed on academic warning or probation and provided with guidance and support to return to good standing.

Student Support and Community Life

Orientation

All students participate in:

- Online pre-semester orientation (technology, study skills, program expectations, student services)
- Residency orientation (community guidelines, meditation hall protocols, library services, academic advisor, and mentor(s) meetings)

Academic and Advising Support

- Students are assigned an academic advisor
- Additional advisors may support spiritual formation
- Research, writing, and independent study support available through the library and faculty mentorship

Community, Ritual, and Spiritual Life

Community and spiritual life are central to Maitripa College’s mission and pedagogical approach, even as our programs move into a low-residency format. Onsite participation in ritual and contemplative life takes place primarily during required residencies, when students gather in person to engage in contemplative practices in the Jokhang (meditation hall). These intensive periods of embodied practice anchor the academic program in lived experience. Beyond residencies, the values and disciplines cultivated through communal practice—reflective awareness, ethical presence, and responsibility to community—are intentionally woven throughout coursework, online learning spaces, mentoring relationships, and service-based formation. Clear protocols guide conduct in ritual contexts, and students are supported in developing appropriate forms of participation and leadership over time. In this way, community, ritual, and spiritual life are not limited to your physical presence on campus, but function as a continuous formative thread shaping scholarship, meditation, and service across the program.

Accessibility and UDL Commitments

Maitripa College is committed to accessibility and inclusive learning. The program design intentionally incorporates principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to support multiple ways of engaging with course materials, demonstrating learning, and participating in community life. All digital platforms and instructional tools are selected and implemented with attention to ADA compliance, ensuring access for students with documented disabilities. Together, these commitments reflect Maitripa’s dedication to supporting diverse learners and creating an educational environment in which all students can participate fully and meaningfully in academic, contemplative, and applied dimensions of the program.

Onsite Intensives: Low-Residency Learning Model

Purpose of Onsite Intensives

Onsite intensives are a central component of the low-residency model, providing opportunities for embodied learning, contemplative depth, and community formation that cannot be replicated online. These short, high-impact residencies are paired with online coursework and are designed to support integrative learning across scholarship, meditation, and service.

Learning Outcomes for Onsite Intensives

Across the two-year sequence, onsite intensives enable students to:

1. Deepen contemplative skill and discipline through guided practice labs aligned with program meditation outcomes.
2. Demonstrate integrative learning by connecting philosophical study with contemplative experience and ethical application.
3. Strengthen formation for service through structured self-reflection, dialogue, and community-based ethical inquiry.
4. Advance scholarly method and communication through writing studios, research design support, peer review, and faculty advising.
5. Build and sustain a learning community through cohort rituals, collaborative inquiry, and mentorship.

Program Specific Outcomes, Curriculum, and Degree Pathways: Master of Divinity—MDiv (Low-Residency)

Program Overview, Purpose, and Goals

The Master of Divinity (MDiv) at Maitripa College is a 4-year, 72-credit professional graduate degree integrating academic study, meditation practice, and spiritual and professional formation. Grounded in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition and informed by contemporary standards in spiritual care, the MDiv prepares scholar-practitioners for service in complex institutional and community settings. The program weaves together Buddhist philosophy, contemplative disciplines, ethics, and applied training to support students in developing the knowledge, presence, and skills required for professional chaplaincy and spiritual care.

The primary purpose of the MDiv is preparation for chaplaincy and spiritual care, including clinical, hospice, and community-based settings, as well as for roles that integrate spirituality into therapeutic and allied professional modalities. The curriculum is intentionally aligned with professional standards for chaplaincy and emphasizes formation for compassionate accompaniment, ethical discernment, cultural humility, and reflective practice. Students are trained to offer embodied, applied Dharma in service to others, responding skillfully to suffering, loss, and moral distress across diverse populations and contexts.

The goals of the MDiv are to form spiritually grounded, professionally competent Buddhist chaplains and caregivers who can serve with integrity in healthcare, nonprofit, educational, and community environments. Graduates are prepared to engage interdisciplinary teams, uphold professional and ethical standards, and articulate Buddhist perspectives within pluralistic settings. As Maitripa College's professional degree in chaplaincy and spiritual care, the MDiv provides a clear vocational pathway for those called to serve others through presence, compassion, and contemplative wisdom, while supporting lifelong practice and continued professional development.

Program Learning Outcomes (MDiv)

Scholarship

- Students will demonstrate foundational knowledge of Buddhist philosophy, history, practices, and ethics according to the Tibetan Buddhist tradition.
- Students will develop skills in critical thinking, research methods and literacy, and master's-level ability to write and speak with an appropriate pastoral, public, and scholarly voice.

Meditation

- Students will engage with the Tibetan Buddhist meditative tradition, demonstrating understanding of multiple contemplative methods for cultivating wisdom, compassion, and awareness.
- Students will critically reflect on their own contemplative practice and articulate how meditative experience informs insight, discernment, and embodied understanding.

Service

- Students will be able to articulate how their spiritual formation becomes a foundation for compassionate and ethical service to others.
- Students will integrate ongoing self-reflection to examine identity and social location, recognizing these as sources of both challenge and strength in inclusive and responsible service to others.
- Students will enact essential meaning-making, interpersonal, and organizational competencies for providing effective and ethical spiritual care and religious leadership.

Curriculum Requirements

General Curriculum Requirements

- 72 credits of coursework meeting core and elective course distribution requirements
- One unit of Clinical Pastoral Education and/or Mentored Field Education
- Spiritual Formation process group
- In-person participation at required Residencies (2 times per year, October and May, approximately 5 days each)
- One Buddhist meditation retreat, a minimum 5 consecutive practice days
- Demonstration of Mastery Capstone or Portfolio

Specific Curriculum Requirements and Sample Courses

Foundational Buddhist Thought and Texts (12 credits)

- Tibetan Buddhist Philosophy I: The Path from Suffering to Enlightenment
- Tibetan Buddhist Philosophy II: The Wisdom and Compassion of the Bodhisattva
- Tibetan Buddhist Philosophy III: The Nature of Mind and Reality
- The Pastoral Buddha: Scriptures and Spiritual Care

Meditation and Spiritual Formation (15 credits)

- Tibetan Buddhist Meditation I: Concentration and Analytic Techniques of Contemplative Practice
- Tibetan Buddhist Meditation II: Cultivating Compassion
- Tibetan Buddhist Meditation III: Cultivating Insight into Emptiness
- Cultivating and Sustaining Compassion for Oneself and with Non-Buddhist Others
- Spiritual Formation group

History of Buddhist Philosophy and Societies (6 credits)

- History of Buddhist Thought and Social Structures from India to Tibet
- Contemporary Buddhist Social Changemaking and Ethics

Spiritual Care Theory and Practice (18 credits)

- Empathy and Skillful Communication
- Introduction to Service, Paths of Transformation, and Finding Your Voice
- Introduction to Spiritual Care and Chaplaincy
- Spiritual Care in Communities
- Spiritual Care for Grief and End of Life Care with Buddhists
- Spiritual Care for Grief and End of Life Care with Anyone

Culturally and Spiritually Responsive Care and Collaboration (9 credits)

- Equanimity, Equality, and Exchange of Self and Other
- Ministry and Diversity
- Methods in Buddhist and Chaplaincy Studies for Navigating Complex Systems: Research Literacy and Writing for Professionals

Practicum / Internship Requirements: Contextual Clinical Education (12 credits)

- Clinical Pastoral Education (1 accredited unit, 6 transfer credits)
- Mentored Field Education or community service internship
- Spiritual Formation Group: Dharma Reflection and Integration (concurrent with field education)

Capstone or Portfolio

The Master of Divinity program includes a culminating capstone or portfolio requirement designed to integrate and assess students' academic learning, contemplative formation, and professional preparation for chaplaincy and spiritual care. This final requirement will provide students with an opportunity to demonstrate their capacity for reflective integration, ethical discernment, and applied practice within the context of Buddhist spiritual care. The specific format, expectations, and evaluation criteria for the capstone or portfolio will be communicated in detail and in consultation with the student, ensuring alignment with student goals, program learning outcomes, professional standards, and accreditation requirements.

Final Word on the MDiv

The Master of Divinity at Maitripa College is a professional degree rooted in Buddhism, informed by lived practice, and oriented toward compassionate service in the world. Designed for those called to chaplaincy and spiritual care, the MDiv integrates rigorous Buddhist scholarship, contemplative formation, and professional preparation to meet the realities of contemporary service contexts. As a cohort-based, formation-centered program, it asks students to engage deeply over time. The MDiv affirms that spiritual care is not simply a skill set, but a way of being, cultivated through study, reflection, supervision, and service, and offered in response to suffering with presence, wisdom, and compassion.