A Reflection on how to approach the BCT application
by Jennifer Block, faculty

Many people are drawn to this training long before they are ready to apply. Some attend an orientation, begin the application, or answer a few questions, only to set it aside for months or even years. Often, they discover that when they return to it, their responses have changed. Some remain consistent, while others reflect the ways they have grown through practice, relationships, loss, and life experience. This, in itself, is an important part of the journey.

The rigor of this application is both intentional and appropriate. The level of self-disclosure it invites is not simply part of an admissions process; it is a meaningful measure of an applicant's spiritual readiness for chaplaincy training. Honest reflection, self-awareness, humility, and a willingness to explore one's inner life are foundational qualities for the work of chaplaincy. The application itself is the beginning of a Buddhist chaplain's formation.

Chaplains are often invited into the lives of people they have never met before. They are strangers to those in their care, yet they ask for something profoundly personal: trust. Such trust cannot be assumed. It is cultivated through presence, authenticity, emotional maturity, and a commitment to ongoing self-understanding. The application is therefore much more than a screening tool—it is a significant first step in the formation of a chaplain.

Applicants should not be surprised if some of the questions feel challenging or evoke discomfort. This is a natural and valuable part of the process. The application is not a job application in the conventional sense, where one presents only strengths, accomplishments, and qualifications. Rather, it is intentionally more vulnerable and reflective, which may feel counterintuitive. Chaplaincy asks practitioners to accompany others through grief, illness, fear, uncertainty, and profound life transitions. Developing the capacity to remain present with discomfort begins by gently and honestly meeting one's own experience.

The application takes effort, and that effort is appropriate. If it raises new questions or reveals areas of continued growth, that too is part of the training. There is no expectation of perfection. Rather, the application invites sincerity, curiosity, and a willingness to engage deeply with one's own spiritual life.

Many applicants discover that completing the application is itself transformative. By approaching it with patience and care, they often find that it affirms both their readiness for the training and their commitment to cultivating the wisdom, compassion, and integrity that Buddhist chaplaincy requires.