



UKABS 2023 CONFERENCE

NEGOTIATING BOUNDARIES

21-23 June 2023, University of St Andrews, Scotland



Photo: Anandajoti Bhikkhu

The UK Association for Buddhist Studies is pleased to announce that our annual conference for 2023 will take place at the University of St Andrews, Scotland, 21-23 June 2023. The conference is supported by the St Andrews Encyclopaedia of Theology. The theme of the conference is Negotiating Boundaries in Buddhism and Buddhist Studies.

Constructed boundaries divide one religion from another, one ethnic group from another, and define gender identities. Further, boundaries exist within many arenas of secular, social and professional life. Within academia, such firm boundaries exist between academics in different disciplines that two people working in the same field at the same institution can be completely unaware of one another. To a casual or uninvested observer, such boundaries can appear clear and solid; on closer inspection they are revealed as porous, complex, contested. For instance, there appears to be a clear boundary between lay and ordained Buddhists across different Buddhist traditions, but temporary ordination is common in some cultures, as is the taking of extra precepts by laity during retreat or on certain days of the month, and Vajrayāna *yogis* and *yoginis* blur this distinction further. As well, cultural practices such as festivals can cut across boundaries between Buddhist and non-Buddhist groups in a society, and plural and hybrid identities problematise the very category of 'Buddhist'. Converts to Buddhism face negotiating their new identity and adapting habits and behaviours. Theoretically, the concept of *anatta* challenges gender or sexuality as fixed categories, but inclusivity might not be played out in the lived experience of Buddhists. From student to professor, scholar-practitioners in Buddhist Studies continually hop across a boundary between critically distant academic and sympathetic insider. Furthermore, Buddhist Studies itself is not a limited good existing solely for its own sake, but has come to inform and be informed by a range of academic disciplines including law, business studies, neuroscience, peace studies, politics, and philosophy amongst others. In fact, Buddhist studies has previously imposed its own boundaries on various aspects of Buddhist tradition by the habit of taxonomy in its critical study: for example, the perceived divides between meditation and text, or text and ritual, and those imagined between artefact and embodied presence. Methodological and categorical insights from various disciplines may well contribute to the construction of new lines of demarcation, or facilitate the disruption of others.

For the conference, our aim is to explore a variety of boundaries including, but not limited to:

- Perceived boundaries between religious 'insider' and 'outsider'
- Constructed boundaries between academic disciplines
- Contested boundaries between one religion and another
- Erected boundaries between those inside the academy and those outside

This conference welcomes papers and panels that explore these boundaries. We would particularly welcome papers from academics who do not affiliate to Buddhist Studies but whose work is informed by Buddhist Studies. The call for panels and proposals opens on the **6th September 2022** and closes on the **5th January 2023**. Details and submission guidelines can be found on the UKABS website: <https://ukabs.org.uk/2023-conference/>