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## **A Mindful Master's Degree in Psychology**

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# A Mindful Master's Degree in Psychology

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**Abstract:** With increasing prominence of mindfulness approaches in Western counselling, it is timely for psychologists' education to address these, but what might a university curriculum with *integrated* mindfulness look like? We provide an example, the "KANUK" programme for master level psychology students at Aalborg University in Denmark. A Danish psychology degree requires 5 years study of psychological sub disciplines. At Aalborg University, the two master level years are organized by so-called profession programmes in accordance with the idea of problem-based learning that is a hallmark of the university. Eight profession programmes are offered and students choose the one which best matches their preferences in terms of intervention forms covered, client groups targeted, and pedagogy of the programme. We reorganized the Applied Neuro, Developmental, and Cognitive Psychology ("KANUK") programme to integrate a crucial role for mindfulness in theory, pedagogy, and personal practice. This was accomplished by scheduling teaching as independent workshops on each their topic (intensive work for 2-4 days with a specific theme or client group), alternating with calmer weeks of reading and mindfulness. Thus, tri-weekly mindfulness sessions supplied continuity to the programme and training of, as well as learning about, mindfulness. These sessions were of 4 hours duration and covered the general idea and history of mindfulness, intervention techniques, scientific evidence, and not least mindfulness practice. This model made KANUK a top-priority programme among students.

## FRAMING

BSc psych = 180 ECTS psychology



MSc psych = 90 ECTS psychology

- 40 ECTS profession program
- 35 ECTS common courses
- 15 ECTS praxis (external)
- 30 ECTS Master's Thesis

## PEDAGOGY

- Problem-based learning
- Research-education-practice interaction
- Focused learning: intensive single-themed workshops
- Research-based theory - and application to cases
- Mindfulness as continuity and as yourself being the case: learn → use → supervise

Prerequisite: BSc in Psychology	"KANUK" Program	7 <sup>th</sup> semester						8 <sup>th</sup> semester						9 <sup>th</sup> semester						10 <sup>th</sup> semester								
		2014			2015			2015			2016			2016			2016			2016								
		9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6					
	Workshop = ★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	Clinical internship						★	★	Project				Master Thesis					
	Mindfulness	Ω	Ω	Ω	Ω	Ω	Ω	Ω	Ω								Ω	Ω	Ω									

## MINDFULNESS GOALS

- Knowledge about and of mindfulness - as research, as tool to teach, and as attitude to self and client
- Embodied metacognitive skills development
- Bridge to praxis and longterm perspective: Prepare for post-graduate training in e.g., MBSR, MBCT, ACT, DBT
- Sustainable self involvement

Basic assumption:

A broad and regular personal practice is a prerequisite for using mindfulness professionally as a psychologist

## WORKSHOP CONTENT

Basis themes:

- Psychology of social inclusion
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (x 3)
- Applied Developmental psych
- Applied Neuropsychology
- Psychiatry Minor

Alternating themes (guests), e.g.,

- Animal Assisted Therapy
- Cross-cultural psychology
- Preventing educational drop-out
- Compassion Focused Therapy

## MINDFULNESS CONTENT AND PROGRESSION

WHEN	WHAT
7. semester	Theoretical and practice-based coursework: What, how, origin, effects.  Are taught the practices from mindfulness teacher, from 9. term students, and from online audio guiding. We recommend personal daily practice for 2-3 months (body scan, breathing exercises and -meditations, compassion meditations and mental practices) and logbook with personal experiences and perceived effects.  Embodied experience is required for understanding, which evolves as experience grows.
8. semester	Practice with specific clients; therapy and/or instruction. Rehearsal of 1) using mindfulness as own therapeutic attitude; 2) flexible methods in therapy; 3) formal guided meditations for groups.  Supervision from both practice leader and from mindfulness teacher.
9. semester	Provide 8-week course for 7. Semester students: Pairwise teach 1-2 of the sessions. Supervision from mindfulness teacher. Feedback from peer and younger student.  Option for supervision if project work involves mindfulness instruction
10. Semester	Option for supervision if project work involves mindfulness instruction

*"the ability to relate differently to negative affect came from having their own ongoing mindfulness practice, so that they might teach mindfulness out of their experience of it. A vital part of what the MBSR instructor conveyed was his or her own embodiment of mindfulness in interactions with the class".*

- Segal et al, 20013, p. 54 (italics in original)