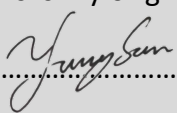




Postgraduate Dissertation coversheet & feedback form

THIS SHEET MUST BE THE FIRST PAGE OF THE ASSIGNMENT YOU ARE SUBMITTING (DO NOT SEND AS A SEPARATE FILE)

<i>For completion by student:</i>		
<i>Student Name</i> Yuang Sun 孫雨昂 <i>Student University Email:</i> 1804386@student.uwtsd.ac.uk		
<i>Module code:</i> SICH7022	<i>Student ID number:</i> 1804386	<i>Educational support needs:</i> No
<i>Dissertation title:</i> Giving to Relatives in Light of the <i>Diamond Sūtra</i> : A Case of Non-Attachment to Gustatory Objects 依《金剛經》教義論對親屬的布施——以不著味塵為例		
<i>Supervisor:</i> Venerable Shengmiao		<i>Word count:</i> 2665
I confirm that this is my original work and that I have adhered to the University policy on plagiarism. Signed 		
Email submission: if you are submitting this form via email, please tick this box ☐ (as a substitute for your signature) to confirm that you agree to the above declaration.		
<i>For completion by the first marker:</i> <i>Comments:</i>		

Final Agreed Mark:
Comments (to indicate how the final agreed mark has been arrived at):

AI Acknowledgement

☐ **I have not used AI in my assignment**

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

☒ **I have used AI in my assignment**

I acknowledge the use of Copilot on 03/2026 to proofread. I used the prompt(s):

1. Please help me correct the grammar format and correct the MHRA format.

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used before, and after the use of AI tools which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

English Review of Dissertation

Before I began to search for a dissertation topic, I had already developed a strong interest in Buddhist studies, especially in the profound doctrine of śūnyatā (emptiness). Therefore, when choosing the direction of my Master's dissertation, I hoped to engage in further research and learning in relation to these deep and complex Buddhist teachings. At the same time, however, it has never been my aspiration to spend a lifetime pursuing theories that are excessively abstract or detached from practical reality. Influenced by figures such as Master Chin Kung and Professor Chia-Ning Chu, I have come to hope that these teachings may move beyond the ivory tower and cease to function merely as tools appreciated and used only by a limited group of people. More importantly, I hope to approach them from a perspective that is both accessible and practical, so that they may genuinely benefit sentient beings, rather than become no more than a form of textual sophistication or rhetorical display for one's own self-elevation. If, after many years of academic study, one can do no more than indulge in elegant language and empty writing, without awakening the moral conscience that a learned person ought to possess, without bringing forth the light and warmth that an educated person should contribute, and without addressing the most urgent difficulties currently faced by the wider public, then what meaning would such scholarship ultimately have? Although I am fully aware of the limitations of my own knowledge, I am still willing to attempt to build a bridge between the most profound and subtle principles in Buddhism and the practical problems of ordinary people's lives. In doing so, I hope to connect abstract theory with real-world issues, so that these ideas may offer concrete and meaningful help to the most ordinary members of society.

Ultimately, after discussion with my supervisor, I decided to define the title and direction of my dissertation in terms of the relationship between *the Diamond Sūtra*, kinship, and the sensory object of taste. In this dissertation, I intend to take the phenomenal perspective of “kinship” and “taste” as the point of entry for an in-depth investigation of the doctrine of non-attachment to form, or non-form, in *the Diamond Sūtra*. I also hope to undertake a cross-referential analysis that brings together discussions from different Buddhist scriptures as well as studies in modern science and ethics. Throughout the dissertation, the scope of kinship under examination will extend progressively from near to distant relations, while the doctrinal discussion will move from the relatively accessible to the more profound. In this way, I aim to offer a more integrated account of the practical applicability of *the Diamond Sūtra*'s teachings

in everyday life, as well as their potential to help resolve worldly ethical disputes and conflicts among relatives. At the same time, I hope to provide a new perspective for a life-oriented interpretation of *the Diamond Sūtra*.

During the early stage of writing the dissertation, I attempted to identify relevant scholarship and reference works. In doing so, I realised that I lacked a sufficiently deep understanding of many foundational aspects of Buddhist studies. I therefore first tried to use books and academic literature to gain an overview of the historical development of Buddhism as a whole. From there, I gradually and purposefully narrowed my focus to Chinese Buddhism, then to the rise and decline of Buddhist thought across different dynasties, and subsequently to changes within *the Diamond Sūtra* as an individual text, as well as the transformations and intellectual trajectories of particular thinkers. Through this process, I hoped to establish a macro-level understanding of *the Diamond Sūtra* before undertaking more detailed analysis, so as to avoid becoming overly narrow in my later research or moving in the wrong direction. However, because my initial literature search was excessively broad in scope, I still found myself lacking sources with strong direct relevance to my topic. It was precisely this breadth of potentially relevant material that prevented me from settling quickly on the overall structure of the dissertation. As a result, I again sought guidance from my supervisor in revising and refining the dissertation outline, and I also reconsidered the title at a more detailed level, so that the perspective of the dissertation could become more precise.

In addition, during the process of researching materials related to *the Diamond Sūtra*, I gradually found that my own line of thought was becoming somewhat inclined towards a Chan Buddhist orientation. I even began to consider, when writing from the perspective of kinship and the six sensory objects, whether the doctrinal dimension of the dissertation might be developed in progressively greater depth, ultimately reaching the non-duality of emptiness and form, and even the state of Buddhahood. However, such an approach is extremely difficult to articulate in writing. Moreover, although I consulted a large number of Chinese and international sources, I continued to feel that the dissertation remained somewhat limited, while at the same time being unable to identify exactly where the problem lay. Consequently, there are still aspects of the structure that require further adjustment.

By 12 December 2026, after I had reported these issues, my supervisor provided careful and detailed guidance and identified two fundamental questions concerning the writing of the

dissertation: “Who is the audience of the dissertation? For whom is it being written?” and “What problem is the dissertation intended to solve?” Under my supervisor’s guidance, I eventually determined that the intended readership of the dissertation was not limited to specialists in the academic field, but also included the general public. I hoped that, through the writing of this dissertation, I would be able to address the real problems and confusions that people encounter in everyday life, while also making clear within the academic sphere that my dissertation is both an interpretation of a classical text and an attempt at the construction of a contemporary Buddhist ethics. Once I had clarified these questions, it became much easier and far more straightforward to readjust the structure of the dissertation. I reduced the proportion of the dissertation originally devoted to abstract philosophical concepts such as “emptiness” and “being” and retained them only as a smaller part of the discussion. At the same time, I reassigned greater weight to research concerned with resolving issues related to kinship, relatives and friends, and the six sensory objects. I also directed more of my personal effort, as well as a larger proportion of the dissertation’s emphasis and content, towards possible solutions to real-world problems. Taken as a whole, this made the dissertation more researchable and more practically relevant.

In addition, my supervisor advised that the dissertation should not contain an excessive amount of purely expository discussion, but should instead place greater emphasis on research and comparative analysis of source materials, as this would enhance its academic value. This advice played a crucial role in both my literature search and the writing process, and helped me avoid many unnecessary detours. Furthermore, during a short break in the dissertation writing period, I travelled in Europe. This journey not only allowed me to rest and relax, but also gave me an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of local dietary practices, which in turn provided inspiration for the dissertation. In this way, I hoped to develop a more international perspective within the thesis, to challenge the limitations of my own habitual way of thinking, and to ensure that the examples and intended readership of the dissertation would not remain confined to a local population alone, but could also extend to transnational families, so that more people might benefit from it.

In the period that followed, I continued to search for books and source materials that could be used as references, while at the same time writing the main body of the dissertation. During the process of drafting the principal chapters, I made a number of further adjustments at the level of detail. One important change was to replace the term “relatives and friends” in the

original dissertation title with “kinship”. The purpose of this revision was to sharpen the overall focus of the dissertation and to make its central concerns more explicit, while also avoiding an overly broad research object that might prevent the discussion from achieving sufficient depth. In addition, following my supervisor’s advice, I provided detailed explanations of the key terms used in the dissertation, so as to reduce the possibility of misunderstanding on the part of readers. On the other hand, with regard to the meaning of *dāna* or giving, the direction of the discussion in the dissertation gradually shifted from a more profound and abstract mode of treatment towards a clearer and more accessible explanation. At the same time, greater emphasis was placed on core ideas such as non-attachment, wisdom, and compassion. I also sought, as far as possible, to identify more concrete examples from contemporary society, so as to bring specialised academic discussion into closer relation with everyday life. The purpose of this approach was, on the one hand, to analyse as clearly as possible the meaning of “giving” in Buddhist scripture and, on the other hand, to make the dissertation more practically relevant, thereby avoiding a mode of discussion that would be excessively abstruse or difficult to understand.

In addition, during the process of writing the dissertation, I still found it difficult to determine accurately what should be included and what should be left aside in certain parts of the discussion. The only point of which I felt relatively confident was my ability to write on the deeper theoretical dimensions of *the Diamond Sūtra*. However, with regard to the overall structure of the dissertation, I continued to experience a sense of uncertainty. For example, when discussing issues related to kinship and the giving associated with the sensory object of taste, the range of possible real-life topics was so broad that it became necessary to make selective choices according to clear criteria. In doing so, I sought to present my ideas in a clear manner and to explore systematically the feasibility of integrating theory with practical reality. In the end, I chose to confine the discussion to several high-frequency contexts, such as family meals, dining out, gift-giving, visiting the sick, and banquets. Through these representative examples, I hoped to demonstrate the practical applicability of the doctrinal principles of *the Diamond Sūtra*. Interdisciplinary studies on taste, food practice, and household affect help illuminate why gustatory situations are particularly charged sites of attachment, negotiation, and relational tension; however, such studies function here as contextual and interpretive support rather than as proof of Buddhist doctrine.

On the other hand, during the process of writing the dissertation, I also consulted a large number of commentaries by different scholars from ancient China, considering whether their interpretations were appropriate and selecting those most relevant to my own topic as reference materials. These sources could all serve as part of the theoretical foundation of the present dissertation. At the same time, I made every effort to engage with relevant discussions by modern and contemporary scholars, with the aim of ensuring that the dissertation would not only incorporate the philosophical wisdom of earlier traditions, but also possess contemporary significance. In addition, I tried as far as possible to locate Western-language scholarship, in order to interpret and substantiate the value of my research from different perspectives. I also attempted to adopt an interdisciplinary approach in my search for materials, drawing on literature from medicine, ethics, psychology, Western religion, food studies, and modern science. As far as possible, I used relevant material from these fields as supporting evidence for the ideas advanced in the dissertation, while at the same time remaining attentive to proportional balance, so as to avoid allowing excessive secondary material to obscure the central argument. Because I cited a substantial number of modern scientific articles and journals in order to support certain Buddhist ideas, the examiners also advised me to avoid treating the two as equivalent. From the perspective of Buddhist thought, scientific theory still belongs to the level of conventional truth within the framework of the doctrine of the two truths. It may therefore be used only as a form of guiding or indirect argumentation, rather than as direct proof or explanation. This was a point that I also tried, as far as possible, to revise and avoid in the dissertation. Furthermore, my supervisor advised that the core issues discussed in the dissertation, together with the corresponding key terms, needed to be explained precisely and given accurate definitions. This was necessary in order to prevent readers from misinterpreting important points, and also to ensure that the dissertation would appear clearer and more coherent, thereby avoiding problems of unclear argumentation or doctrinal confusion.

Even after the dissertation had been completed in full, the limitations of the word count meant that there were still many issues that could not be discussed in sufficient depth. For example, although the dissertation includes an examination of *dāna* and related doctrinal questions, it gives relatively limited attention to the core issue of the tension between the ethics of differentiated kinship relations and the Buddhist ideal of equal compassion. In addition, although the sensory object of taste, or food, was chosen as a point of entry because of its everyday relevance and its high emotional significance, its ethical particularity, as well as its connection to questions of boundaries and limits, still requires a more systematic explanation.

Although the dissertation also attempts to use the perspective of the doctrine of the two truths to explain the different levels of meaning involved in dāna, the compatibility and mutual integration between the central meaning of the “emptiness of the threefold sphere” and the theory of the two truths still require further discussion and development on a larger scale. Questions of this kind can only be left for further advancement in future academic research.

Overall, the literature reviewed in this study shows that scholarship on *the Diamond Sūtra* has provided a strong basis for understanding key ideas such as non-abiding, emptiness, and markless giving. These studies explain important concepts including the six sense-objects, the threefold emptiness of giver, recipient, and gift, and the role of Prajñā in overcoming attachment. At the same time, both traditional commentaries and modern research suggest that *the Diamond Sūtra* should not be treated only as a text of abstract philosophy, but also as a source for practical and ethical reflection in daily life. However, the existing literature still leaves an important gap. Many studies focus either on doctrinal interpretation or on general ethical application, but few examine how non-attached giving works in close family relationships, where emotion, obligation, and expectation are often strongest. This is especially important because kinship is not only a space of care and gratitude, but also a space where comparison, control, and emotional pressure may appear. The feedback from the oral examination also shows me better suggestions and ideas that any Buddhist reading of family ethics needs to consider not only compassion and self-restraint, but also difficult relationships, ethical boundaries, and the need to respond wisely to harmful patterns of care. The literature also supports the value of focusing on gustatory objects. In this study, taste is not chosen at random. It is important because food is closely linked to everyday family life, desire, memory, and emotional exchange. Acts such as cooking, sharing meals, festival gifting, hospital visits, and wedding or funeral banquets show how taste can become a practical site for studying attachment and non-abiding together. Therefore, this study responds to a clear gap in current research by bringing *Diamond Sūtra* interpretation into dialogue with kinship ethics and everyday practice. It argues that non-attachment to gustatory objects offers a useful and concrete way to rethink care, obligation, and compassion in modern family life.