

GOLDSMITHS
University of London

ADMISSIONS POLICY

1 General Statement

Goldsmiths' Mission is to offer a transformative experience, generating knowledge and stimulating self-discovery through creative, radical and intellectually rigorous thinking and practice. This mission is underpinned by several core values, namely

- Achieving academic excellence
- Embracing complexity
- Respecting the individual
- Embracing diversity
- Radical thinking
- Creating change, locally and globally

In pursuit of these values, the University's Admissions Policy articulates the means by which we will encourage applications from a wide range of educational and social backgrounds and ensure these all receive fair, transparent and consistent consideration, while seeking to enrich the community of the institution with those students who are best placed to contribute to its intellectual life. This policy aims to reflect current good practice in Higher Education and to conform to the guidelines laid out in the Quality Assurance Agency's Code of Practice and the recommendations made by the Schwarz Report into Higher Education Admissions.

2 Our commitment to applicants

To ensure that its admissions processes are fair, transparent and consistently applied, Goldsmiths will ensure that

- All applications received by the relevant deadline (15 January in the case of UCAS applications, 1 December for PGCE Primary applications and the stated institutional deadline for a range of postgraduate programmes) receive equal academic consideration
- All applications are considered in a holistic manner, taking into account all relevant information available, including that which is provided within the personal statement and reference, with a view to establishing applicants' enthusiasm for and commitment to their chosen programme of study as well as their ability to successfully meet the demands of the programme
- Where applicants present qualifications from outside the UK, advice and guidance is sought (and supplemented where appropriate with expert market knowledge gleaned from Goldsmiths Recruitment staff) from recognised advisory bodies such as UK NARIC, the British Council and UCAS to determine equivalency to UK qualifications
- It is made clear where, for certain programmes of study, there are additional elements to factor into this process of consideration, such as the applicant's demonstration of their ability to work as part of a team where collaborative peer work forms an essential component of the programme
- All programmes of study clearly state their entry requirements, including any relevant experience and skills as well as academic qualifications, together with

any non-academic conditions (eg, fitness to train criteria) which applicants may be required to fulfil, and there is an indication where programmes actively seek (especially mature) applicants from non-traditional or vocational routes

- Where certain programmes of study have specific entry requirements in terms of a preferred subject mix, or any subjects which will not be taken into consideration when presented within applicants' qualification portfolios, these will be clearly stipulated within the programme entry requirements
- There is, in addition, an indication of a typical offer for most undergraduate programmes (expressed as a combination of A level grades)
- This information is easily accessible via the university's website or prospectus, or relevant UCAS Entry Profile
- Any offer of a place on an undergraduate programme will not typically deviate from the stated typical offer by more than two grades, and only ever in accordance with an applicant's predicted grades
- All postgraduate programmes also give a clear indication of the standard of entry qualifications required for successful consideration (eg, an undergraduate degree with at least a lower second classification)
- Where applicants for certain programmes of study are invited to submit examples of creative or written work in order to demonstrate their potential for successful engagement with the programme, this requirement (which may be made of any applicant where it is deemed necessary and appropriate) is made clear
- Where applicants are to be invited to interview, this requirement, as well as details on the conduct of the interview and any necessary preparation, is clearly articulated
- A decision is made on an application within 28 days of receipt at Goldsmiths, provided that the applicant has provided all the required information. The exceptions to this are those postgraduate programmes which batch applications for equal consideration following the closing date, and UCAS applications received in the period from 1 January to 14 February, where a decision may take up to 6 weeks to be processed.

3 The selection process

Decisions regarding admission to all programmes of study at Goldsmiths are made according to established entry criteria, applied uniformly and consistently, ensuring equal consideration of all applications received prior to any stated deadlines. These criteria are established through dialogue between admissions experts and academic staff and reviewed annually.

For a significant proportion of undergraduate programmes of study, the consideration of individual applications takes place within a central Admissions Office, where specialised Admissions staff review applications on the basis of the stated qualifications (predicted or achieved), life and work experience, personal statement, academic reference and any other relevant information, according to the agreed criteria. For other undergraduate programmes and the majority of postgraduate programmes, the applications are considered by admissions tutors within academic departments; in some cases this process will also include portfolio review and interview.

In keeping with the institution's commitment to provide a fully professional admissions service, Goldsmiths is currently seeking to further integrate and co-locate its Admissions function. It is envisaged that as part of this process, additional

undergraduate and postgraduate programmes will be brought into the centralised decision making procedure in due course.

The central Admissions Office is responsible for all communications with UCAS and the GTTR including transmission of all decisions relating to applications. Where applicants have applied directly to the institution, a formal decision will be communicated to them by the Admissions Office. Any offer of a place will be confirmed in writing and the applicant will be invited to accept the offer; in doing so they will be asked to declare that they undertake to observe the Charter, Statutes, Ordinances and Resolutions of Goldsmiths and also to abide by the rules and regulations of the institution regarding its students.

4 Complaints and appeals

Goldsmiths is committed to providing a fair and efficient admissions service and encourages applicants to inform the institution of any difficulties encountered during the admissions process in order that procedures can be regularly reviewed and improved. It is hoped, therefore, that most queries and complaints can be resolved informally, but where this is not possible, applicants are advised to follow the complaints procedure outlined below.

A complaint is defined as a statement of dissatisfaction with the manner in which an application has been handled in relation to the institution's admissions policies and procedures. The reasons for such a complaint will include administrative error, the behaviour of a member of university staff, the conduct of an interview (where applicable) or the result of a fee classification. An appeal is defined as a statement of dissatisfaction with the outcome of a decision made on an application. While the College will routinely consider all complaints that relate to the administration of an application, it is not prepared to consider any appeal based on dissatisfaction with the academic judgement underpinning a decision made on an application.

A complaint should be lodged as close as possible to the point at which it arises and always within 14 days of the relevant activity. In the first instance, the complaint should be referred to the Head of Admissions. Applicants can normally expect a response within 14 days. It is anticipated that it will be possible to resolve the majority of complaints in this way.

If the applicant remains dissatisfied, within 14 days they should refer the matter to the Director of Marketing, Recruitment and Communications, giving full details of the case, including the nature of the complaint, any relevant documentation, the dates and details of any previous unsuccessful attempts at resolution and an indication of what reasonable steps should be taken to resolve the complaint. Applicants can normally expect an acknowledgement of the complaint within 7 days, and a communication of the outcome within 21 days.

The Director of Marketing, Recruitment and Communications will then conduct a full investigation, with reference to academic and administrative colleagues, including the relevant Head of Department or appointed nominee where applicable. The Director of Marketing, Recruitment and Communications will make a record of the proceedings and, having ensured that the University's complaints procedure has been fully adhered to and the investigation has been carried out satisfactorily, will then decide whether the complaint will be upheld or dismissed.

If the applicant remains dissatisfied, within 14 days they should refer the matter to the Registrar and Secretary to assess cases at College level. A meeting will be arranged with the relevant members of staff and, following this, a decision will be reached regarding the complaint and the applicant notified of this in writing. **The decision reached by the Registrar and Secretary is final.**

5 Feedback

In order to ensure the transparency of its Admissions Procedures, Goldsmiths recognises the need to respond to an applicant's request for information as to why their application was deemed unsuccessful. The Admissions Office will provide feedback on an individual basis in response to receiving a formal request from the applicant within 28 days of the decision being made.

Feedback will be provided in writing (not via the telephone or in person) within 28 days of receipt of the request. In line with Data Protection policies feedback will not be provided to anyone other than the applicant. Feedback will usually be sent via letter to the correspondence address the applicant has provided on their application form.

Any applicants wishing to appeal against a decision in light of their feedback should refer to the complaints procedure above.

Note that UCAS has now implemented an online electronic feedback system which enables Higher Education Institutions to provide feedback to all unsuccessful applicants via the standard UCAS transactions and Goldsmiths routinely uses institution specific codes, relating to key entry criteria, within reject (and withdrawal) decisions. Unsuccessful undergraduate applicants should, therefore, receive preliminary feedback via UCAS Track.

6 Use of Contextual Data

UCAS now collects a series of data which helps to provide Higher Education Institutions with details about the context in which applicants have achieved their academic qualifications (see below). There may be occasions where the applicant and / or their referee requests that the university takes account of certain contextual factors which may have affected their performance, and to take this into consideration when deciding whether or not an offer of place may be made (although the College will not routinely use this information to inform its decision making). These factors include:

- Family circumstances
- Socio-economic background
- Having a first language other than English
- Illness or illness/death in the family
- Interrupted schooling
- Part-time employment due to financial hardship
- Having no family members who have been to university
- Being in Local Authority care
- Having refugee or traveller status
- Having home responsibilities

Evidence of one or more of these contextual factors will not necessarily mean that the applicant in question will be treated in a preferential manner, as each

application is always considered on its own individual merits. However, in cases where there is clear evidence that contextual factors have affected performance and achievement, and where the applicant is able to demonstrate the motivation and potential to achieve, the institution will consider this as part of their holistic assessment of the application, and take it into account in deciding whether to make an offer, and if so the level of any offer to be made.

7 Criminal convictions

See the institution's policy on Criminal Declarations by applicants, which includes details on the procedures for dealing with applications from serving prisoners, for ascertaining fitness to train where there is a statutory requirement and for handling CRB disclosures and recording information relating to criminal convictions.

8 Occupational Health

Applicants offered a place on a PGCE or Social Work programme are required to complete an occupational health questionnaire. This is to ensure that the applicant's health will not be compromised by their profession, the health and safety of other staff will not be adversely affected by their being unfit to work.

Fitness criteria

In order to assess applicants' health, the College will seek to establish that they:

- are physically able to cope with the day-to-day duties of the programme including any work placements
- can communicate effectively with children, parents, clients and colleagues
- have sound judgement and insight, and can remain alert at all times
- are able to respond to clients' or pupils' needs rapidly and effectively
- can manage classes or groups
- do not constitute any risk to the health, safety or well-being of those in their care
- can, where disabilities exist, meet all these criteria through reasonable adjustments made by Goldsmiths.

The decision that Goldsmiths makes on applicants' occupational fitness will be based on their ability to satisfy these criteria, taking into account all the duties which they will undertake on programme / placement, and any health problems they have.

Applicants may, in some circumstances, be asked to attend a medical examination. Comprehensive guidance and instructions will be given with the occupational health questionnaire and any further requirements explained in full.

Fitness classifications

On the basis of the completed occupational health questionnaire (and evidence from a medical examination and specialist advice if appropriate) applicants will be classified in one of three categories:

- A. Those in good health or with a condition which is unlikely to interfere with their efficiency in teaching or social work.
- B. Those in good health but with a condition which may interfere to some extent with their efficiency in teaching some or all subjects or social work, but where the condition is not sufficiently serious to render them unfit for a career in teaching or social work.

C. Those with a condition which renders them unfit for working in teaching or social work. Applicants should not normally be included in this category unless they have a psychiatric or physical disorder which is likely to interfere seriously with their ability to study and work efficiently.

A 'C' classification will be given to an applicant who is not in a satisfactory state of health at the time of the examination but who may, after appropriate medical treatment, make a good recovery. In this case, they will be able to make a fresh application once they are able to provide a satisfactory medical report following treatment.

Appeals

Applicants will not be able to appeal to either the College or the relevant government authorities against the decision made on their occupational fitness. However, applicants can submit additional medical specialist advice in order that the decision may be reconsidered.

9 Disabilities

Goldsmiths welcomes applications from students with specific learning difficulties and disabilities and is committed to a policy which allows, as far as possible, for equality of opportunity and access to higher and further education. No discrimination on account of disability shall be shown against any person in determining whether or not they shall be admitted to the university and Goldsmiths recognises the need, under the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act, to make all and any reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of any applicant who has declared a disability who is to be offered a place on a programme of study.

Where an applicant declares a disability at the point of application, this information is highlighted on all paper and electronic records so that staff involved in the decision making process are aware of the issue. A communication is sent to the applicant outlining the support available at the institution and giving contact details for the disability team at Goldsmiths. The application is considered (either by central Admissions Office staff or academic selectors) in the usual way and a decision made on academic grounds as to whether an offer of a place is to be made.

Where the applicant is to be made an offer, they will be sent a further communication asking for more detailed information about their disability so that the institution can ensure that appropriate support mechanisms are in place. They are also invited to contact the disability co-ordinator to make an appointment to discuss any requirements in more detail.

See <http://www.gold.ac.uk/disability/> for further details on Goldsmiths' policies relating to disabilities.

10 Admitting students under the age of 18

See the institution's policy on the admissions of students under the age of 18.

11 Deferred entry

Goldsmiths recognises the value of a gap year between school and university, and where applicants are intending to take a year out they are encouraged to apply a year in advance. Many of our programmes will consider applications for deferred

entry but in some subject areas the demand for places is so high that we will not usually accept such applications. Where applicants are considering applying for a deferred place, they are advised to contact the central Admissions Office (who may refer the request on to a relevant Admissions Tutor) before applying, outlining the reasons for the deferral request and an indication of their intentions for the gap year.

At the institution's discretion, it may also be possible to defer a place once an offer has been made and accepted; in such circumstances applicants are advised to ensure that they have satisfied all the requirements of their deferred place before undertaking any major commitments such as travelling.

12 Applications for 2nd and 3rd year entry

Goldsmiths will consider applications on their individual merits for direct entry into the 2nd year of certain undergraduate degree programmes (some programmes will not usually consider such applications and this will be made clear in the relevant programme details on the university's website, in its prospectus or via the UCAS Entry Profile) where applicants have completed or are due to complete a year (or more) of study on a relevant programme; entry into the 3rd year will usually only be considered in exceptional circumstances, unless there is an approved institutional articulation agreement in place. Applicants are required to submit an application via UCAS in order to be considered, and this must include the following information in order to assess suitability (if not already included within the application it should be sent under separate cover to the Admissions Office):

- A recent transcript outlining all modules, courses and assignments completed or being taken as part of the current programme of study
- A predicted grade / classification from a current tutor, preferably as part of a written academic reference
- A list of all academic and other relevant achievements to date
- A statement of intent, with reasons for requesting entry to Goldsmiths

Once this information has been received, Admissions staff will endeavour to make a timely decision as to whether an offer of a place for the 2nd (or subsequent) year of entry can be made. Where courses or modules previously taken do not satisfactorily match the core components of the 1st year at Goldsmiths, an offer for entry into our 1st year may be made.

13 Progression agreements

As part of its commitment to Widening Participation and in conjunction with the Lifelong Learning Networks to which it belongs, Goldsmiths has entered into a number of progression agreements with local Further Education institutions, whereby certain cohorts of applicants to specified programmes, who demonstrate that they have attained or are due to attain particular qualifications, are guaranteed an interview for a place on their chosen programme of study.

In addition, the College offers a number of Integrated degrees which include a year of study at foundation level (HE Level 0) within the departments of Computing and Professional and Community Education (PACE), leading to direct entry onto the first year of the corresponding Bachelor degree, providing that students have attained the required level of achievement for progression.

14 Applications from mature students

Goldsmiths is committed to life-long learning, and has a highly diverse student population, with almost half its students being classified as mature (over 21 for undergraduate study and over 25 for postgraduate study). While recognising the commitment and dedication that mature students bring to university life, Goldsmiths is aware that many mature students face additional challenges in balancing their studies with family or work commitments. The Student Support team offer a range of services which may be helpful to mature students, while tutors and other staff will endeavour to be flexible and understanding in order to allow mature students to maximise their opportunities while studying at the university.

Mature students may not necessarily require the same formal academic qualifications as other applicants (although for some programmes such as PGCEs, entry requirements are in part determined by external bodies, eg, the Training and Development Agency). Applications will be considered on their individual merits and as well as their academic background, any relevant work or life experience which an applicant demonstrates will be taken into account when considering them for a place.

The department of Professional and Community Education (PACE) offers a wide range of courses specifically tailored to adults who want to return to study, many of which have flexible entry arrangements. These include entry by portfolio (where applicants present collections of creative and other relevant work as evidence of their suitability for a programme) and procedures that take into account applicants' life experiences, both at work and in other contexts.

Goldsmiths is in the process of formulating a comprehensive policy on the Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning (APEL) and this will be made available in due course.

15 Interviews

Where applicants are to be interviewed, then this requirement, as well as details on the conduct of the interview and any necessary preparation, will be clearly articulated to applicants in advance. Applicants will also be invited to provide details prior to the interview of any medical, special or cultural needs that should be taken into consideration.

Where applicants are to be interviewed in groups (eg, for PGCE programmes where group work is an integral part of the programme content) then this requirement will be made clear in advance, and all applicants will also have the opportunity to discuss issues on an individual basis if it is not appropriate to raise these in a group setting.

Admissions tutors and staff will follow the selection procedures for interviewing prospective students as below:

Prior to the interview

All staff involved in interviews intended to select applicants should, wherever possible, undergo training in interviewing skills and equal opportunities awareness such as a recruitment and selection training course by the Staff Development Team.

Criteria for selection should relate to subject knowledge and suitability for the chosen programme.

Interviewers should know the emergency procedures for the location at which the interviews will be held and should inform the candidate of these procedures on arrival.

During the interview

Questions at interview should not be in any way discriminatory in nature, nor should they refer to choices made at other Higher Education Institutions if the applicant is a potential undergraduate student (unless the subject is raised by the applicant).

Interviewers should avoid aggressive questioning or over-familiarity at interview, as well as behaviour that might intimidate, embarrass or demoralise the applicant.

Interviewers should not enter into discussion about the equivalence of qualifications with applicants (queries about the equivalence of such qualifications should be noted and then discussed with the Admissions Office).

For UCAS and GTTR applicants, interviewers should not normally inform applicants of the likely outcome of the interview, but should indicate that a formal decision will be conveyed via the relevant Clearing House by the central Admissions Office. However, at certain times of the year (eg, during Clearing) it may be necessary to vary this practice.

Equal opportunities considerations

Interviewers have a responsibility to ensure that the University's Equal Opportunities Policy is observed at every stage of the selection process.

Interviewers must be aware that it is unlawful to discriminate against a disabled person in respect of selection and admission and questions about disability can only be those which seek to establish the level of support which might be required. It should be noted that the University has a duty to make reasonable adjustments and to provide where necessary appropriate facilities so that disabled students are not placed at a disadvantage compared to nondisabled students.

Should a disability be declared at interview, a note must be made of this and referred on to the central Admissions Office and the Disability team, as this declaration does constitute a formal notification to the institution. Interviewers should be aware of any special needs of the candidate that may affect their performance in the interview and any interviews with candidates with mobility difficulties should be conducted in a location with adequate access arrangements. Any other special arrangements, eg, interpreters for applicants using BSL, will need to be made through liaison between the academic department, the applicant and the Disability Team at Goldsmiths. Further advice can be sought from the Disability Team on the requirements for disabled applicants.

Interviewers should be aware of any cultural needs of the applicant that may influence the interview and be mindful of any possible misunderstandings which could occur between persons of different cultural backgrounds.

After the interview

A formal note of the interview (as agreed according to the selection criteria) should be taken and made available to the Admissions Office so that appropriate feedback can be given if requested.

Feedback on any interview can be made available to candidates on request and it should be noted that any interview records compiled are subject to the Data Protection Act; any written notes of the interview can be requested by applicants following an interview.

16 Equal Opportunities

See the institution's Code of Practice on Equal Opportunities at:

<http://www.gold.ac.uk/equal-opportunities/equality-diversity/codeofpractice/>

17 Responsibilities for Admissions

The body with overall responsibility for the institution's admissions policy, its implementation, review and approval, is the Academic Development Committee, reporting to Academic Board (which is the supreme academic authority within the committee system). The terms of reference of the committee include the stipulation to maintain oversight of the admissions process across the institution, ensuring that it conforms to institutional guidelines, and to regularly review the admissions policy and make recommendations as appropriate to the relevant committee or body within the institution; also to ensure that structures are in place for the training and development of all staff involved in admissions and all roles are clearly defined.

In addition, the central Admissions Office in conjunction with academic and administrative colleagues regularly review and update both operational procedures and the information made available to applicants.

18 Further information

Further information or advice relating to admissions policies or procedures can be obtained from:

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