**Programme Specification**

Postgraduate Programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awarding Body/Institution</th>
<th>University of London</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Institution</td>
<td>Goldsmiths, University of London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Final Award and Programme Title</td>
<td>MA Political Communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Interim Award(s)</td>
<td>Postgraduate Diploma in Political Communications; Postgraduate Certificate in Political Communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration of Study/Period of Registration</td>
<td>1 year full time or 2 years part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCAS Code(s)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QAA Benchmark Group</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FHEQ Level of Award</td>
<td>Level 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme Accredited by</td>
<td>December 2005, further amended in March 2010 and May 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date Programme Specification last updated/approved</td>
<td>May 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Department/Institute</td>
<td>Media &amp; Communications</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Programme overview

This MA offers teaching that is critical, innovative and diverse. It combines theory with practical, applied elements, and draws on a range of research and contemporary examples.

These come from current work in politics, political science and media studies, and also from political sociology, cultural theory and journalism. The curriculum covers political communication, from the national and international down to the local and personal, from governments and parties to NGOs and local activist groups. It engages with cultural, alternative and digital, interactive communication as well as traditional mass media.

This dynamic programme, first and foremost, offers critical engagement. It asks difficult questions about politics, economic policy, society and the media. Taking this programme will not just give you an understanding of the forms and impacts of political communications. It will also help you contextualise that knowledge in relation to the structures, institutions and actors that are at the heart of politics and media.

This programme is broadly conceptual in focus, but also offers several practical, applied options as well as skills-based components. All students take a research skills module and are supervised through a dissertation with a research component. There are options, such as Campaign Skills, Social Media Campaigning, Digital News Writing and Media Law, which are entirely practice-based and taught by professionals in the field. There are also several speaker series running each year with guests from the worlds of politics, journalism, business and campaigning coming to talk.

### Programme entry requirements

Applicants will normally be expected to hold a good first degree in a relevant subject and (if a non-native speaker) possess IELTS of 6.5, or equivalent. However, consideration will be given to applicants without the necessary formal qualifications but who have professional experience in a related field and are able to demonstrate their commitment and ability to undertake a programme of rigorous academic study.
Aims of the programme

The MA in Political Communications aims to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the interactions between political actors, communication industries and the public in contemporary societies. Specifically the programme will equip students with in-depth knowledge of the importance of communication in the political process and of how, in a democratic polity, political institutions and others seek to communicate with the public and vice-versa. For the main part, this will lead to a concentration on the role of the mass media but other forms of political communication - including the techniques of marketing, polling, face-face interaction and internet campaigning - will also be studied. However, the knowledge and skills acquired in such a study will have far broader applications. Students completing this programme will have at their disposal, a range of tools that will enable them to analyse social and communicative interactions in the public sphere and to make judgements about future modules of action based on this understanding.

The programme will provide students with:
- knowledge of the history and development of political communications with a international emphasis;
- an understanding of the theoretical debates that have informed the study of political communications;
- an awareness of both dominant and alternative models of interaction between political actors, communicators and the public;
- an overview and insight into current debates - both academic and professional - within the field.

In addition, the programme will also provide students with practical skills and insights that will enable them to:
- Undertake a range of tasks in relation to the planning and commissioning of political communications work from within various public and private bodies;
- Commission political communications work from within public and private sector bodies or on behalf of clients;
- Analyse political communications activity from and academic and journalistic perspectives.

What you will be expected to achieve

The programme's subject-specific learning outcomes require students to think critically about a range of issues concerning political communications and to be able to justify their views intellectually and theoretically. This in turn will help them to make their own the existing intellectual traditions which organize the current field of political communications. In addition, students will also develop a wide range of transferable skills necessary for employment in a variety of different contexts.

Students who exit the programme at the Postgraduate Certificate stage should be able to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge and Understanding</th>
<th>Taught by the following modules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A1</strong> Contribute to current debates – both academic and professional – within the field of political communications;</td>
<td>Core modules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A2</strong> Critically assess the practical and theoretical contexts in which political communications actors work.</td>
<td>Core Modules</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive and Thinking Skills</th>
<th>Taught by the following modules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>B1</strong> Utilise conceptual knowledge and critical reasoning skills in complex problem solving;</td>
<td>All modules</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### B2
Deploy a range of intellectual skills and linguistic tools to produce academic work of an appropriate level

All modules

### B3
Demonstrate an appropriate range of transferable skills such as ‘communication skills, skills of initiative and personal responsibility’, decision-making and ‘the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development’ (QAA).

All modules

### Subject Specific Skills and Professional Behaviours and Attitudes

**C1**
Interpret a variety of source material in the context of the analysis of political communications and associated fields

Core modules

### Transferable Skills

**D1**
Utilise conceptual knowledge and critical reasoning skills in complex problem solving

All modules

**D2**
Deploy a range of intellectual skills and linguistic tools to produce academic work of an appropriate level

All modules

**D3**
Demonstrate an appropriate range of transferable skills such as ‘communication skills, skills of initiative and personal responsibility’, decision-making and ‘the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development’ (QAA).

All modules

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Students who exit the programme at the Postgraduate Diploma stage should be able to:

### Knowledge and Understanding

**A1**
Contribute to current debates – both academic and professional – within the field of political communications;

Core modules

**A2**
Critically assess the practical and theoretical contexts in which political communications actors work.

Core modules

**A3**
Identify alternative paradigms of interaction between political actors, communicators and the public.

Core modules

**A4**
Demonstrate a high level of understanding of the history and development of political communications with a particular focus on the UK and US.

Core modules

### Cognitive and Thinking Skills

**B1**
Utilise conceptual knowledge and critical reasoning skills in complex problem solving

All modules

**B2**
Deploy a range of intellectual skills and linguistic tools to produce academic work of an appropriate level;

All modules

**B3**
Demonstrate to a high level a range of transferable
skills such as ‘communication skills, skills of initiative and personal responsibility’, decision-making and ‘the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development’ (QAA).

### Subject Specific Skills and Professional Behaviours and Attitudes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Taught by the following modules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Interpret a broad variety of source material in the context of the analysis of political communications and associated fields;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>Use and reflect on a range of communications skills from journalism, politics and public relations;</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Transferable Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Taught by the following modules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D1</td>
<td>Utilise conceptual knowledge and critical reasoning skills in complex problem solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2</td>
<td>Deploy a range of intellectual skills and linguistic tools to produce academic work of an appropriate level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D3</td>
<td>Demonstrate to a high level a range of transferable skills such as ‘communication skills, skills of initiative and personal responsibility’, decision-making and ‘the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development’ (QAA).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By the end of the MA programme students should be able to:

### Knowledge and Understanding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Taught by the following modules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Demonstrate a high level of understanding of the history and development of political communications with a particular focus on the UK and US;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Apply different perspectives on political communications in the evaluation of specific campaigns and controversies;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>Evaluate the significance of a range of theoretical debates that have informed the study of both politics and political communications;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td>Contribute to current debates – both academic and professional – within the field of political communications;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A5</td>
<td>Critically assess the practical and theoretical contexts in which political communications actors work;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A6</td>
<td>Identify alternative paradigms of interaction between political actors, communicators and the public.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Cognitive and Thinking Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Taught by the following modules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>Utilise conceptual knowledge and critical reasoning skills in complex problem solving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Deploy a range of intellectual skills and linguistic tools to produce academic work of an appropriate level;  

All modules

Demonstrate to a very high level a range of transferable skills such as 'communication skills, skills of initiative and personal responsibility', decision-making and 'the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development' (QAA).

All modules

Demonstrate the ability to work independently and critically in the production of an original research project.

All modules

Subject Specific Skills and Professional Behaviours and Attitudes  

Taught by the following modules

Interpret a broad variety of source material in the context of the analysis of political communications and associated fields;

Core modules

Use and reflect on a range of communications skills from journalism, politics and public relations

Core modules

Transferable Skills  

Taught by the following modules

Utilise conceptual knowledge and critical reasoning skills in complex problem solving

All modules

Deploy a range of intellectual skills and linguistic tools to produce academic work of an appropriate level

All modules

Demonstrate to a very high level a range of transferable skills such as 'communication skills, skills of initiative and personal responsibility', decision-making and 'the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development' (QAA).

All modules

Demonstrate the ability to work independently and critically in the production of an original research project

All modules

How you will learn

From the outset, students are guided to work independently and to think through the intellectual issues for themselves. Through seminars and a variety of tutorials (with personal tutors and module leaders) student progress is carefully monitored to ensure progression towards the achievement of the outcomes.

The acquisition of knowledge and understanding and cognitive learning outcomes is through weekly lectures, seminars and workshops so that core knowledge gained through reading and lectures may be reinforced through seminar participation, discussion and debate. Outside speakers with specialist knowledge of a particular topic will also give occasional lectures. All sessions will be complemented by the viewing/reading of relevant media texts that will feed into, and illuminate, the subject under consideration. Visits will also be arranged during the two modules to relevant media and political locations. These will include visits to both mainstream and non-mainstream media organisations as well as to Parliament and a local council meeting.

The acquisition of the second set of subject specific and transferable skills learning outcomes is achieved
by students’ full participation in the structured learning activities and the completion of examined and non-examined work that will involve considerable independent study. Students will also receive feedback from tutors throughout the programme in seminars and in response to their examined work. Tutorial support is available to advise students on their progress in skill acquisition in both theoretical and more practical work.

In preparing for the dissertation, students will receive intensive one-to-one tutoring over a prolonged period, which allows them to devise their own original contribution to the field. Most, if not all of the learning outcomes – from the capacity to produce an original map of the field, to retrieve and evaluate information, to work to deadline – are condensed and applied in the process of preparing and delivering the dissertation with the guidance of tutors.

How you will be assessed

Assessment of the first set of outcomes is by a combination of coursework and examined essays, a dissertation and seminar participation. Students will also produce a practical project to a set brief as well as a research-led report that evaluates their understanding of a political communications campaign.

The second group of learning outcomes are primarily tested through examined work and, in particular, through a practical project – carried out in small groups – where students deploy their critical skills to produce campaign materials in response to a set brief. The development of effective interpersonal and other oral communications skills is encouraged by staff in all seminars and through tutorial support.

In sum, students will be required:

a) to write
i Essays which evaluate not only students’ broad grasp of the political communications field but also their ability to construct coherent written arguments concerning a wide range of theoretical issues. Essays are normally 5-6000 words on both the core modules and optional modules in the Department of Media and Communications. Depending on the particular option, students may be required to produce research reports, campaign strategies or other forms of assessment that are equivalent to a 5-6,000 word essay.
ii The dissertation (12-15,000 words, inclusive of foot-notes and bibliography) assesses something rather different: not so much breadth as depth, requiring sustained research and all the imaginative qualities which mark an original piece of intellectual inquiry.

b) to participate in
i Seminars, presentations, workshops and visits that are designed to develop a range of critical, research and interpersonal skills

Marking criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Specific Marking Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>80-100%</td>
<td>Distinction (Outstanding/Exceptional)</td>
<td>Exceptional work of potentially publishable quality showing originality and based on extensive research and independent thought. Represents to the achievement of the learning outcomes to an outstanding level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79%</td>
<td>Distinction</td>
<td>Awarded when the work demonstrates the application of appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills specified in the learning outcomes of the module to a very effective extent. The work will show evidence of extensive relevant reading and an impressive grasp of current major issues in the field. This knowledge will have been reviewed critically with insight and independence of thought. Arguments and the presentation of evidence will demonstrate sophisticated reasoning, with clear awareness of issues of methodology and evidence, and</td>
</tr>
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</table>
be particularly clear, well-focused and cogent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60-69%</td>
<td>Merit</td>
<td>Awarded when candidates demonstrate the application of appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills specified in the module learning outcomes to an effective extent. The work will demonstrate sound analytical and critical abilities and will show consistency and fluency in discussing and evaluating evidence and theories drawn from a wide range of sources. It will demonstrate an ability to relate this reading to their topic, and will clearly have understood and assimilated the relevant literature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59%</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>Awarded when the essay demonstrates the application of appropriate knowledge, understandings and skills specified in the learning outcomes of the module to a satisfactory extent. There is clear evidence of knowledge and understanding, but where there may be limited development of ideas, critical comment or methodology. Within these limitations there will be indication that the candidate has grasped fundamental concepts and procedures in the field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-49%</td>
<td>Fail</td>
<td>Indicates that a candidate has demonstrated an unsatisfactory application of appropriate knowledge, understandings and skills specified in the learning outcomes of the module. Such a mark will be awarded to work that is based on inadequate knowledge and that fails to grasp essential concepts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-29%</td>
<td>Bad fail</td>
<td>Below 30 (Bad Fail): Scrappy and totally inadequate work that demonstrates a systematic failure to achieve the appropriate learning outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-9%</td>
<td>Very bad fail</td>
<td>A submission that does not even attempt to address the specified learning outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>Non submission or plagiarised</td>
<td>A categorical mark representing either the failure to submit an assessment or a mark that is assigned to a plagiarised piece of work.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**How the programme is structured**

Attendance at all lectures, seminars and tutorials is mandatory. In order to gain an MA, students are required to gain a total of 180 CATS made up in the following way:

- Two core modules in the Department of Media and Communications worth 60 CATS (30 CATS each)
- Option modules to the value of 60 CATS chosen from the Departments of Politics and Media and Communication (2 x 30 CATS or a combination of 30 and 15 CATs)
- The Dissertation is worth 60 CATS.

Students are required to take two compulsory modules inside the Department of Media and Communications: The Structure of Contemporary Political Communications, and Critical Perspectives on Political Communications, taught by a mix of lecture, seminar, student presentations and tutorials. The first module is a foundational one introducing students to the standard literatures, debates, actors and communication processes in contemporary political communications. The second module goes into adjacent areas of literature and debates, and requires students to think critically about key critiques of political communications and to reflect on the relationship between political communications and theories of power, democracy, globalisation and policy. Students are also required to attend a Research Skills training module that is delivered in nine two-hour sessions across the Autumn and Spring terms and in which they are introduced to a range of methodological approaches that are relevant to the analysis of political communications.
Students are also required to take 60 CATs worth of module options chosen from either the Department of Politics or the Department of Media and Communications. Modules currently on offer in Politics include: Risk in Contemporary Politics, Government and Politics of the European Union, Global Political Cultures 1: Knowledge Power and Culture, Memory and Justice in Post-conflict Societies, Theories of International Relations, An Other China: Postcolonial Theory, Postmodern Concerns, Continental Political Theory, Global Political Cultures 2: The Body Gender and Politics, and Rhetoric and Political Speech. Those in Media and Communications include: Political Economy of the Mass Media, Media Law and Ethics, Campaign Skills, Social Media Campaigning, Media Ritual and Contemporary Public Cultures, Branding 1: History, Contexts and Practice, Reconceptualising the Media Audience, Public Culture and Everyday Life, Strategies in World Cinema, Cinema and Society, Screen Cultures, Media, Ethnicity, Nation, Chinese Cinemas and Music as Communication and Creative Practice are some of the options offered in recent years.

30 CATS of the 60 CATS worth of optional modules may also be selected from the departments of Sociology, Anthropology, and English and Comparative Literature. Please note that the list of options available may change from year to year, because of staff research commitments and timetabling. By and large the options are taught by the familiar mix of lectures, seminars and tutorials, although there are some variations. Some options offer a greater input of workshop organization.

All students are required to produce a Dissertation. Individual tutors are assigned by the penultimate week of the autumn term, so that students will be able to have a meeting with their dissertation supervisor before the end of that term. There then follows a scheduled progression of meetings, where accessing archives, methods of analysis, theoretical approach and (finally) drafts are discussed, one-to-one. This is complemented by the research skills module offered in the Autumn and Spring terms which introduces students to a range of methodological debates and approaches that are relevant to researching the political communications field.

Students are also encouraged to attend the Visiting Speakers Forum which is aimed in particular at postgraduate students on practice programmes in the Department of Media and Communications. This is a series of workshops and speeches by leading figures across the media which, in 2009/10, featured lawyer Michael Mansfield, Jana Bennett, the Director of BBC Vision, political journalists Ann Leslie and Shaun Ley and the documentary filmmaker Paul Watson.

We recommend that full-time students take two modules per term while part-time students take the two core modules in their first year and then the option modules in their second year and complete the dissertation.

Full-time students take the programme over one calendar year, part-time students over two years. Formal teaching takes place in the autumn term (eleven weeks) and spring term (eleven weeks). The summer term is designed in part for revision, assessment and for intensive dissertation preparation.

In order to proceed into their second year, part-time students need successfully to complete the two compulsory core modules.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year of Study 1</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Module Title</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Structure of Contemporary Political Communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Perspectives on Political Communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module(s) to the value of 60 CATS within either the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Academic support

The Department recognizes the importance of supporting student learning with high quality teaching. All non-native speakers are strongly encouraged to attend classes at the English Language Centre (ELC), which provides teaching not merely in technical matters of writing in English, but also modules tailor-made for students on our programme. An appreciation of the essential nature of pastoral guidance informs all the Department's teaching. There are, at College level at Goldsmiths, a wide range of support services open to all students, including assistance for issues concerning finance, disability, counselling, careers and language support. Full details can be found on the College web site.

Links with employers, placement opportunities and career prospects

The Department of Media and Communications has a strong record of employment prospects for its graduates. Graduates from other postgraduate programme have won numerous awards for their practice work and have gone on to a wide variety of jobs: some in the media industries, some in professional fields only distantly related to the media, and - consistently - a small group from each annual intake go on to do further academic research. MA Political Communications graduates are likely to have a broad range of relevant careers within political consultancy and organising, advertising, marketing, journalism and research.

The requirements of a Goldsmiths degree

Master’s Degrees

All Master's degrees at Goldsmiths have a minimum value of 180 credits. Programmes are comprised of modules which have individual credit values. In order to be eligible for the award of a Master’s degree students must have passed all modules on the programme.

Intermediate Exit Points

Some programmes incorporate intermediate exit points of Postgraduate Certificate and Postgraduate Diploma, which may be awarded on the successful completion of modules to the value of 60 credits or 120 credits respectively. Individual programmes may specify which, if any, combination of modules are required in order to be eligible for the award of these qualifications. The awards are made without classification.

Final Classification

There are four possible categories of final classification for Master’s degrees: Distinction, Merit, Pass and Fail.

In order to be awarded an overall classification of Distinction, students should have obtained:

- a mark of at least 70% (or A grade) for the dissertation/project (or equivalent)
  AND
- EITHER a mark of 70% (or A grade) in at least half of the remaining credits,
  OR an overall weighted average mark (based on credit value) of at least 70%

In order to be awarded an overall classification of Merit, students should have obtained:

- a mark of at least 60% (or B grade) for the dissertation/project (or equivalent)
  AND
EITHER a mark of 60% (or B grade) in at least half of the remaining credits. 
OR an overall weighted average mark (based on credit value) of at least 60%

Pass: In order to be awarded an overall classification of Pass must have passed all the modules on a programme but not have met the criteria for the award of an overall classification of Merit or Distinction

Fail: If any module on a programme has been failed on more than one occasion the programme will be failed

For further information, please refer to the Regulations for Postgraduate Taught Students, which may be found here: http://www.gold.ac.uk/governance/studentregulations/

Programme-specific rules and facts

First year part-time students are normally required to complete successfully the two core modules and one optional module before proceeding to their second year of study.

PGDip
Students who successfully complete module to the value of 120 CATS including modules “The Structure of Contemporary Political Communications” and “Critical Perspectives on Political Communications” (60 CATS) may exit with the award of the Postgraduate Diploma in Political Communications

PGCert
Students who successfully complete the modules “The Structure of Contemporary Political Communications” and “Critical Perspectives on Political Communications” (60 CATS) may exit with the award of the Postgraduate Certificate in Political Communications

How teaching quality will be monitored

Goldsmiths employs a number of methods to ensure and enhance the quality of learning and teaching on its programmes.

Programmes and modules must be formally approved against national standards and are monitored throughout the year in departmental staff / student forums and through the completion of module evaluation questionnaires. Every programme also has at least one External Examiner who produces an annual report which comments on the standards of awards and student achievement.

This output is considered with other relevant data in the process of Annual Programme Review, to which all programmes are subject, and which aims to identify both good practice and issues which require resolution.

Every six years all programmes within a department are also subject to a broader periodic review. This aims to ensure that they remain current, that the procedures to maintain the standards of the awards are working effectively and the quality of the learning opportunities and information provided to students and applicants is appropriate.

Detailed information on all of these procedures are published on the webpages of the Quality Office (http://www.gold.ac.uk/quality/).