

# Postgraduate Diploma in Political Communications

## Programme Specification

**Awarding Institution:**

University of London (Interim Exit Awards made by Goldsmiths' College)

**Teaching Institution:** Goldsmiths, University of London

**Name of Final Award and Programme Title:** Postgraduate Diploma in Political Communications

**Name of Interim Exit Award(s):**

Postgraduate Certificate in Political Communications

**Duration of Programme:** 1 year full-time or 2 years part-time

**UCAS Code(s):** Not applicable

**HECoS Code(s):**

(100444) Media and Communication Studies (75%)

(100491) Politics (25%)

**QAA Benchmark Group:**

**FHEQ Level of Award:** Level 7

**Programme accredited by:**

**Date Programme Specification last updated/approved:** May 2021

**Home Department:** Media, Communications and Cultural Studies

**Department(s) which will also be involved in teaching part of the programme:**

Not applicable

## Programme overview

This Diploma 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, 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 PG Diploma 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 an 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 organise 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:

### Knowledge and understanding

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
A1	Contribute to current debates – both academic and professional – within the field of political communications;	Compulsory modules
A2	Critically assess the practical and theoretical contexts in which political communications actors work.	Compulsory modules

## Cognitive and thinking skills

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
B1	Utilise conceptual knowledge and critical reasoning skills in complex problem solving;	Compulsory modules
B2	Deploy a range of intellectual skills and linguistic tools to produce academic work of an appropriate level;	Compulsory 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'.	Compulsory modules

## Subject specific skills and professional behaviours and attitudes

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
C1	Interpret a variety of source material in the context of the analysis of political communications and associated fields.	Compulsory modules

## Transferable skills

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
D1	Utilise conceptual knowledge and critical reasoning skills in complex problem solving;	Compulsory modules
D2	Deploy a range of intellectual skills and linguistic tools to produce academic work of an appropriate level;	Compulsory 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'.	Compulsory modules

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

### Knowledge and understanding

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
A1	Contribute to current debates – both academic and professional – within the field of political communications;	Compulsory modules
A2	Critically assess the practical and theoretical contexts in which political communications actors work;	Compulsory modules
A3	Identify alternative paradigms of interaction between political actors, communicators and the public;	Compulsory 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.	Compulsory modules

### Cognitive and thinking skills

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
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’.	All modules

### Subject specific skills and professional behaviours and attitudes

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
C1	Interpret a broad variety of source material in the context of the analysis of	Compulsory modules

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
	political communications and associated fields;	
C2	Use and reflect on a range of communications skills from journalism, politics and public relations.	Compulsory modules

## Transferable skills

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
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 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'.	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.

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.

## **How you will be assessed**

Formal assessment for the compulsory modules is by writing, though with a mix of different forms. Option modules may include different forms of assessment. The assessment is demanding, requiring students to work on different assignments simultaneously. The number of assignments ensures students have a grasp of breadth as well as depth of the field of media and communications. Assessment of this sort tests not only intellectual knowledge, but also the capacity to work under pressure, and to think independently and resourcefully.

Summary of assessment requirements:

- 6,000 word essays, or equivalent, for each of the 30 CATs core and option modules, or 3,000 word essays, or equivalent, for each of the 15 CATs options, assessing knowledge of a specialist area. Other forms of assessment may be encountered (e.g. group presentations/reports, diaries, portfolio exercises) depending on option modules chosen.

## **How the programme is structured**

Students will need to take and pass modules to the value of 120 credits including the two compulsory 30 credit modules: “The Structure of Contemporary Political Communications” and “Critical Perspectives in Political Communications” which take place in the autumn and spring terms respectively. The first is a formal lecture programme (combined with seminars) while the second is a workshop that requires students to think critically about key critiques of political communications and to reflect on their relationship to theories of power, democracy, globalization and policy. The remaining 60 credits will be taken from our extensive suite of MA option modules.

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 and assessment.

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

## Full-time mode

Module Title	Module Code	Credits	Level	Module Status	Term
The Structure of Contemporary Political Communications	MC71083A	30	7	Compulsory	1
Critical Perspectives in Political Communications	MC71084A	30	7	Compulsory	2
Optional modules equal to the value of 60 credits, chosen from an approved list published annually	Various	60	7	Optional	1-2

## Part-time mode

### Academic year of study 1

Module Title	Module Code	Credits	Level	Module Status	Term
The Structure of Contemporary Political Communications	MC71083A	30	7	Compulsory	1
Critical Perspectives in Political Communications	MC71084A	30	7	Compulsory	2

### Academic year of study 2

Module Title	Module Code	Credits	Level	Module Status	Term
Optional modules equal to the value of 60 credits, chosen from an approved list published annually	Various	60	7	Compulsory	1-2

To successfully complete the Postgraduate Certificate as exit degree, students will need 60 CATS, consisting of the two compulsory taught modules of the programme.

## Academic support

Support for learning and wellbeing is provided in a number of ways by departments and College support services who work collaboratively to ensure students get the right help to reach their best potential both academically and personally.



All students will be allocated a Personal Tutor who has overall responsibility for their individual progress and welfare. Personal Tutors meet with their students at least twice a year either face-to-face, as part of a group and/or electronically. The first meeting normally takes place within the first few weeks of the autumn term. Personal Tutors are also available to students throughout the year of study. All students are also allocated a Senior Tutor to enable them to speak to an experienced academic member of staff about any issues which are negatively impacting their academic study and which are beyond the normal scope of issues handled by Programme Convenors and Personal Tutors. Students will also be supported by module convenors who offer tutorials relating to module content.

Students are provided with information about learning resources, the [Library](#) and information available on [Learn.gold \(VLE\)](#) so that they have access to department/programme handbooks, programme information and support related information and guidance.

Taught sessions and lectures provide overviews of themes, which students are encouraged to complement with intensive reading for presentation and discussion with peers at seminars. Assessments build on lectures and seminars so students are expected to attend all taught sessions to build knowledge and their own understanding of their chosen discipline.

All assessed work is accompanied by some form of feedback to ensure that students' work is on the right track. It may come in a variety of forms ranging from written comments on a marked essay to oral and written feedback on developing projects and practice as they attend workshops.

Students may be referred to specialist student services by department staff or they may access support services independently. Information about support services is provided on the [Goldsmiths website](#) and for new students through new starter information and induction/Welcome Week. Any support recommendations that are made are agreed with the student and communicated to the department so that adjustments to learning and teaching are able to be implemented at a department level and students can be reassured that arrangements are in place. Opportunities are provided for students to review their support arrangements should their circumstances change. The [Disability](#) and [Wellbeing](#) Services maintain caseloads of students and provide on-going support.

The PG Diploma is primarily aimed at students who want to develop their skills or retrain. The [Careers Service](#) provides central support for skills enhancement, running [The Gold Award](#) scheme and other co-curricular activities that are accredited via the Higher Education Achievement Report ([HEAR](#)). The Department has strong industry links and hosts a range of events that bring together industry experts, academics and students.

The [Academic Skills Centre](#) works with academic departments offering bespoke academic literacy sessions. It also provides a programme of academic skills workshops and one-to-one provision for students throughout the year.

## **The requirements of a Goldsmiths award**

The Postgraduate Diploma has a total value of 120 credits.

Programmes are composed of individual modules, each of which has its own credit value. Part-time students normally take modules to the value of 90 credits each year. If a programme has a part-time pathway, the structure will be set out in the section “How the programme is structured” above.

All modules are at level 7 of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.

More detailed information about the structure and requirements of a Goldsmiths degree is provided in the [Goldsmiths Qualifications and Credit Framework](#).

## **Modules**

Modules are defined as:

- “Optional” – which can be chosen from a group of modules
- “Compulsory” – which must be taken as part of the degree

## **Progression**

Some programmes may require students to pass specific modules prior to completion of the dissertation/major project (or equivalent). Additionally, where a programme of study extends beyond one calendar year, students may be required to pass specific modules in their first year of study before progressing to the second year. Where this is the case, these requirements will be set out in this Programme Specification.

## **Award of the degree**

In order to graduate, students must successfully complete all modules specified for the programme, as set out within the section “How the programme is structured” above.

## **Classification**

Final degree classification is calculated on the basis of a student’s mean average mark (based on credit value) across all modules on the programme.

Masters degrees are awarded with the following classifications:

Distinction – 70%+

Merit – 60-69%

Pass – 50-59%

More detail on the [calculation of the final classification](#) is on our website.

## **Interim exit awards**

Some programmes incorporate an interim exit point of Postgraduate Certificate which may be awarded on the successful completion of specified modules to the minimum value of 60 credits. The award is made without classification.

When this award is incorporated within the programme, the relevant learning outcomes and module requirements will be set out within the “What you will be expected to achieve” section above.

The above information is intended as a guide, with more detailed information available in the [Goldsmiths Academic Manual](#).

## **Programme-specific rules and facts**

### **General programme costs**

In addition to your tuition fees, you will be responsible for meeting standard costs associated with your study. Find out more information at [gold.ac.uk/programme-costs](http://gold.ac.uk/programme-costs).

### **Specific programme costs**

Not applicable.

## **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 are formally approved against national standards and are monitored throughout the year, such as in departmental committees, a variety of student feedback mechanisms and through the completion of module evaluation questionnaires. Every programme has at least one External Examiner who reviews comments annually on

the standards of awards and student achievement. External Examiner(s) attend Boards of Examiners meetings and submit an annual written report.

Modules, programmes and/or departments are also subject to annual and periodic review internally, as well as periodic external scrutiny.

Quality assurance processes aim to ensure Goldsmiths' academic provision remains 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 these procedures are published on the [Quality Office web pages](#)