

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

Final Award: Postgraduate Diploma in Political Communications

Programme Name: Postgraduate Diploma in Political Communications

Total credit value for programme: 120

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: Not applicable

FHEQ Level of Award: 7

Programme accredited by: Not applicable

Date Programme Specification last updated/approved: July 2023

Home Department: Media, Communications and Cultural Studies

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

Not applicable

Programme overview

The PG Diploma in Political Communications 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.

The programme is embedded in the Department's ethos of diversity and interdisciplinarity. This is reflected in the combination of theory and practice which allows us to challenge norms and engage with real-world issues. The programme is theory-driven but grounded in practice.

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 significant professional experience in a related field and are able to demonstrate their commitment and ability to undertake a programme of rigorous academic study.

Programme learning outcomes

The Diploma in Political Communications aims to provide students with a systematic 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.

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 will 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

Students who achieve a Postgraduate Diploma in Political Communications will 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 be assessed

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.

Formal assessment is all by writing, though with a mix of different forms. 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.

Grading criteria

Mark	Descriptor	Specific Marking Criteria
80-100%	Distinction (Outstanding/ Exceptional)	A mark of 80-100% is awarded when a candidate satisfies the requirements for a distinction, but to an outstanding degree. Such work may be of publishable quality and contribution to debate within the field.
70-79%	Distinction	A mark of 70-79% is awarded when the essay 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 be particularly clear, well-focused and cogent. A mark of 80% or higher is awarded when a candidate satisfies the requirements for a distinction, but to an outstanding degree. Such work may be of publishable quality, and will be a significant contribution to debate within the field.

Mark	Descriptor	Specific Marking Criteria
60-69%	Merit	A mark of 60-69% is awarded when candidates demonstrate the application of appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills specified in the module learning outcomes to an effective extent. The essay will show consistency and fluency in discussing and evaluating evidence and theories drawn from a wide range of sources. They will demonstrate an ability to relate this reading to their topic, and will clearly have understood and assimilated the relevant literature.
50-59%	Pass	A mark of 50-59% is 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.
30-49%	Fail	A mark of 30-49% is awarded when the candidate demonstrates an unsatisfactory application of appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills specified in the Learning Outcomes of the module.
10-29%	Bad fail	A mark of 10-29% is awarded when the assessed work demonstrates a significant overall failure to achieve the Learning Outcomes, and where there is no evidence of recognition of the question nor of how it might be responded to.
1-9%	Very bad fail	A submission that does not even attempt to address the specified learning outcomes..
0%	Non submission or plagiarised	A categorical mark representing either the failure to submit an assessment or a mark assigned for a plagiarised assessment.

Mode of study

On campus

Programme structure

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	Optional	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 are allocated a Personal Tutor (one in each department for joint programmes) who has overall responsibility for their individual progress and welfare. Personal Tutors meet with their student at least three 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. These meetings aim to discuss progress on modules, discussion of the academic discipline and reports from previous years if available (for continuing students). This provides an opportunity for progress, attendance and assessment marks to be reviewed and an informed discussion to take place about how to strengthen individual learning and success.

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 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 [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 [Centre for Academic Language and Literacies](#) 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.

Placement opportunities

Not applicable

Employability and potential career opportunities

The Department of Media, Communications and Cultural Studies has a strong record of employment prospects for its graduates. Graduates from other postgraduate programmes 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. PG Dip Political Communications graduates are likely to have a broad range of relevant careers within political consultancy and organising, advertising, marketing, journalism and research.

Programme-specific requirements

None.

Tuition fee costs

Information on tuition fee costs is available at: <https://www.gold.ac.uk/students/fee-support/>

Specific programme costs

None.