



**Student
Experience and
Engagement
Strategy
2015–2018**

Foreword by Patrick Loughrey Warden



“The ambition is clear - to support a student’s journey from pre-enrolment to post graduation.”

The student experience is at the centre of everything we do here at Goldsmiths. Whether it be through our research inspired teaching, an ever innovative curriculum or vibrant extracurricular and support offering, we have an unshakeable commitment to improving the experience of our diverse population.

This document outlines the blueprints to ensure we continue doing just that. It is a result of extensive consultation with our student representatives, in collaboration with key academic and professional services staff. The ambition is clear - to support a student’s journey from pre-enrolment to post graduation and give them the best possible experience and support.

In recent years, large-scale upgrades to our digital and physical infrastructure have delivered individual online timetables for students and much needed enhancements to our estate. Our departmental and course representatives have been instrumental in catalysing these projects, regularly focusing all of our minds on what is important.

I am proud that last year we launched the Student Experience Sub Committee, unprecedented in our Governance structure and a central platform for student feedback - including through NSS and departmental surveys - to be considered. We are already seeing the benefit of this: the new feedback policy has driven us to make great improvements in the timeliness and meaningfulness of assessment feedback.

Our new Equality and Diversity Strategy champions the celebration of the diverse and creative culture of Goldsmiths. With this in mind, I hope you will join me in celebrating our achievements and continue to support the strengthening of the student-staff collaboration.

Patrick Loughrey
Warden



Foreword by The Goldsmiths Students' Union (GSU)



Howard Littler,
GSU President 2014-15

The Student Experience and Engagement Strategy is more than a document. For it to work it should be a fluid, live, actionable, collaborative piece of work. I'm pleased to say so far that is what it is. At the start of the 2014-15 academic year the Goldsmiths Students' Union and the University worked together to create the first ever committee within our governance structure focused explicitly on the student experience. It is deputy chaired by the SU president and has over five student members. Out of that came the working groups for the Student Experience and Engagement Strategy that you are reading.

As a group we recognised a couple of things.

First, that there is no such thing as one student experience. This may seem obvious, but evolving beyond an undergrad-centric focus is important. Secondly, the need to be ambitious. We spoke openly about an innovative curriculum, championing the fantastic research we do, making our campus an exemplar of accessibility and constant student involvement in decision making, including in the recruitment of front line staff.

Finally, we recognised that this document would mean nothing without staff and student buy-in. This is when a staff-student partnership becomes a reality. That isn't easy.

It would be easy for a culture of passivity and 'top-downness' to develop in our University. The creation of this document and ambition it encompasses rejects that. I hope we can all get behind it.



Adrihani Rashid,
GSU President 2015-16



Goldsmiths is committed to delivering an excellent student experience. This takes collaboration and a commitment to continuous improvement.

An excellent student experience is the responsibility of everyone at Goldsmiths, and is achieved through the joint endeavour of our community of academic and professional services staff, students' union, and students.

An excellent student experience – a definition



An excellent student experience is characterised by a student being meaningfully engaged with their chosen university - from their initial point of enquiry right through to graduation and beyond.

The learning experience is at the heart of the overall student experience, and includes excellent teaching, underpinned by clear and accessible resources, facilities and on and offline support mechanisms. The wider co-curricular experience allows students to reach their potential and expand their horizons.

All students should know how and where to access support, and be able to create enriching new opportunities for themselves. Communication should be collaborative, open, transparent and regular, and reflect the diverse student body at Goldsmiths.

How we will measure this



There are a number of systems in place, both formal and informal, to measure and understand the student experience. The QAA Quality Code defines the expectations of the standards that we should meet.

We monitor how well we are doing by collecting student feedback on a regular basis. This is gathered quantitatively and qualitatively - through national data collection, local surveys, our excellent Departmental Student Coordinators, and feedback from individual students.

Through effective engagement with students and in partnership with the Goldsmiths Students' Union we can ensure that every student is able to thrive at Goldsmiths.



This strategy sets out our aims across five main areas, which make up the key pillars of the student experience.



THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

PEOPLE

At the heart of this strategy is our commitment to an enhanced learning experience that reflects our rich heritage of challenging convention, pushing boundaries, and innovating.

It complements existing strategies, such as the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and The Equality and Diversity Strategy, focusing on aspects of the learning experience that are core to student success but not addressed elsewhere.

ENVIRONMENT

COMMUNICATION

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

The learning experience

Innovation in learning

Goldsmiths prides itself on a dynamic and fresh approach to learning, teaching and research, and this is a core expectation of the learning experience.

Goldsmiths will meet this by:

- Developing staff to teach new and engaging content that is research-led
- Sharing research findings through Goldsmiths Research Online so that they are freely accessible
- Enabling and supporting flexible delivery of content that uses the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) to its full extent
- Managing existing learning spaces to ensure they are fit for purpose
- Creating new spaces that cultivate dynamic learning practices

Example:

The MA in Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship has established an interactive, workshop-based approach to teaching that was co-developed with students to ensure that it meets their different learning styles. Visual and constructionist techniques are used, as well as conventional lectures and seminars, to support the whole group. The programme has also developed reading groups led by students who share, on a blog via the VLE, their book reviews, developing the learning experience through the group.

Supporting transitions

The effective transition from one stage of education to another is a key way to determine success. Existing services will work together to support student development, including but not limited to:

- Offering GoldStart, an intensive one-day transition programme, to all students who progress to undergraduate study at Goldsmiths
- Providing wellbeing support throughout a student's life at Goldsmiths, and tailoring this to meet specific needs during different stages of education
- Providing ongoing support to students through the Student Centre (a 'one-stop shop' for student services)
- Supporting students in the progression to further study through expert advice from Goldsmiths' Careers Service

Example:

In response to student feedback, two wellbeing events were delivered in 2015. 'Health and Wellbeing Days' offered students the chance to take part in a series of events over two days. 'Be Well, Do Well' saw a month of activities in May to help students cope with exam stress. Both events will become annual campaigns.



Example:

The GoldStart Transition Programme was piloted in the summer of 2014. It brought 70 students from non-traditional backgrounds together to provide an introduction to life at university. Designed to remove barriers to student success, the programme included academic skills sessions, an introduction to the campus, interaction with GSU, careers skills advice, and general information on accessing support. The programme has been cited by students who participated as a key determinant of success in feedback (ISB/SB 2014).

Employability

Whatever a student plans to do after they graduate, the world beyond Goldsmiths demands more than a qualification, and it's important to have a portfolio of transferable skills and a breadth of experience to draw on. Goldsmiths offers a wealth of activities and expert support where this is concerned, and a student's skills and experiences can be recorded and presented for future opportunities via the Gold Award or the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR).

- Our lively clubs and societies provide the opportunity for students to develop transferable skills and build networks
- Work placements, part-time work and internships are available in a huge range of settings

- Expertise and resources are available to support each student's career planning through the Careers Service
- The Gold Award and HEAR are structured and recognised ways to build portfolios of co-and extra-curricular achievements
- There is a focus on entrepreneurship and collaborative cultural practice, in and outside of the curriculum (including in the Institute for Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship), both through current staff and students and via Goldsmiths alumni

Preparing to learn

We recognise the importance of students being ready to learn, both at the point that they join Goldsmiths and while they're progressing through their studies. A key outcome of this area is equipping each student to become an active participant in the learning experience. This is facilitated by:

- Delivering comprehensive and timely induction sessions to Goldsmiths and their departments
- Embedding continuous learner support to ensure that all students, regardless of their background, are able to access learning. This is delivered by a range of staff across academic departments and various services including the Careers Service, Library, Student Services, Teaching and Learning Innovation Centre (TaLIC), and the Centre for English Language and Academic Writing (CELAW)

- Enabling academic staff to deliver effective departmental level support through the Senior Tutor and Personal Tutor system
- Providing peer-level support through the Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) scheme, e-mentor and buddy systems

Example:

The Library has developed a programme to support students learning through the VLE: the Goldsmiths Information Skills Tutorial (GIST).

GIST asks for students to work through four modules: PLAN, FIND, EVALUATE and USE. These are designed to help students get started on academic research. Students learn about the different kinds of information and research resources available to them, how to choose the ones that are right for assignments, and how to use them effectively, covering the important issues of correct referencing, plagiarism and copyright.

Enabling learning, and learning resources

Effective and enjoyable learning is underpinned by timely and appropriate access to materials, together with clear and up-to-date information about resources and support.

The essential components of this area will be delivered by:

- Enabling and supporting staff to make full use of the VLE in delivering their learning
- Ensuring that there is close collaboration between academic and Library staff - assuring the timely availability of reading lists and other materials
- Providing materials in accessible formats to reflect the wide-ranging needs of our students
- Delivering timetabling and other organisational information in timely, efficient and accessible ways

Example:

The Estates Office, in conjunction with wider Professional Services teams, has completed a project that allows students to access their timetables online, far in advance of the beginning of term. This is a project that had been requested for some time by students.



People



The people at Goldsmiths create the student experience. Our students and staff come from many backgrounds, and no one student will experience Goldsmiths in the same way.

The recruitment and selection of the right staff and students is vital to the student experience and this pillar of the strategy sets out key elements for the development and support of the vibrant Goldsmiths' community.

| INTERNATIONAL | | | |
|---------------|-----|--------------------------|-----|
| ARGENTINA | 1 | JORDAN | 7 |
| AUSTRALIA | 19 | KAZAKHSTAN | 3 |
| BANGLADESH | 21 | KUWAIT | 3 |
| BRAZIL | 41 | LEBANON | 7 |
| BRUNEI | 1 | MALAYSIA | 23 |
| CANADA | 47 | MEXICO | 16 |
| CHILE | 12 | NEPAL | 2 |
| CHINA | 188 | NEW ZEALAND | 8 |
| COLOMBIA | 15 | NIGERIA | 26 |
| ECUADOR | 3 | NORWAY | 72 |
| EGYPT | 5 | PAKISTAN | 11 |
| GHANA | 9 | PALESTINE | 3 |
| HONG KONG | 32 | PERU | 3 |
| INDIA | 39 | QATAR | 2 |
| INDONESIA | 14 | RUSSIA | 34 |
| IRAN | 11 | SAUDI ARABIA | 10 |
| IRAQ | 4 | SINGAPORE | 46 |
| ISRAEL | 15 | SOUTH AFRICA | 11 |
| JAMAICA | 8 | SOUTH KOREA | 212 |
| JAPAN | 74 | SRI LANKA | 3 |
| | | TAIWAN | 72 |
| | | THAILAND | 28 |
| | | TURKEY | 36 |
| | | UNITED ARAB EMIRATES | 3 |
| | | UNITED STATES OF AMERICA | 309 |
| | | VENEZUELA | 1 |
| | | VIETNAM | 9 |
| | | HUNGARY | 28 |
| | | IRELAND | 109 |
| | | ITALY | 230 |
| | | LATVIA | 16 |
| | | LITHUANIA | 53 |
| | | LUXEMBOURG | 10 |
| | | MALTA | 3 |
| | | NETHERLANDS | 26 |
| | | POLAND | 12 |
| | | PORTUGAL | 13 |
| | | ROMANIA | 8 |
| | | SLOVAKIA | 3 |
| | | SLOVENIA | 3 |
| | | SPAIN | 23 |
| | | SWEDEN | 29 |
| | | EUROPEAN UNION | |
| | | AUSTRIA | 34 |
| | | BELGIUM | 19 |
| | | BULGARIA | 19 |
| | | CROATIA | 1 |
| | | CYPRUS | 30 |
| | | CZECH REPUBLIC | 14 |
| | | DENMARK | 42 |
| | | ESTONIA | 9 |
| | | FINLAND | 30 |
| | | FRANCE | 118 |
| | | GERMANY | 168 |
| | | GREECE | 86 |

This chart details the number of students currently enrolled on Goldsmiths courses from around the world (data source: Student Records System)

“The best thing about Goldsmiths is the people.”

James,
PhD in Computer Science

Facilitating best fit for students

Selecting a university is an important decision that will have a huge impact on an individual's life and outlook. Goldsmiths is committed to supporting every student during this decision-making process. This is detailed in the Admissions Policy and includes:

- Delivering an excellent application experience by providing accurate information and structured communications throughout the application process
- Developing innovative and robust systems to ensure speedy and efficient communication with applicants
- Working collaboratively with applicants to support their decision-making and ensure best-fit with Goldsmiths

Example:

Our Open Days and Applicant Days are staffed by hundreds of Student Ambassadors, as well as students from academic departments. This helps prospective students gain insights into what life at Goldsmiths is really like. The Departments of Psychology and Educational Studies both include their Departmental Student Coordinators in on-campus activities, and the Department of Art involves students in the interview process for new students.

Staff

High-quality, student-focused staff are vital to delivering an outstanding student experience. Recruitment and retention are key to accomplishing this, and are achieved by:

- Expert training, advice and guidance from Human Resources on the best way to select staff
- Including, wherever possible, a student in the selection process for student-facing staff roles
- Providing additional training, in collaboration with GSU, outlining the needs of our students
- Ensuring all staff have the information and facilities that they need to support students appropriately
- Recruiting a new team of trained wellbeing specialists to support students with counselling or disability needs throughout their studies

Example:

The Department of Psychology has understood the importance of involving students in the recruitment process for staff. In the 2014/15 academic year, two of their Departmental Student Coordinators were involved in the interview day for recruiting new full-time lecturers.

Valuing diversity

The Goldsmiths community is incredibly diverse, and this is a key aspect of the student experience. Understanding, respecting and celebrating this is underpinned by the Equality and Diversity Strategy. This is complemented by:

- Extensive widening participation activities - including working with local schools whose pupils may be underrepresented in higher education; running mentoring schemes for BME students; and the Open Book project, which supports people from socially excluded groups move into education
- Scholarships and bursaries for students who may otherwise have difficulty funding their studies
- Our Inclusion and Learning Support Service, which supports disabled students
- Becoming a Stonewall Diversity Champion, demonstrating our commitment to understanding the needs of students and staff
- Carrying out academic research and teaching practice that is driven by the desire for greater equality, inclusion and social justice
- Raising awareness through collaboration between staff and GSU to deliver structured communication and training

Example:

There are now gender-neutral facilities available on campus, an initiative started by students to make the campus more inclusive for trans* students.

Environment

The environment at Goldsmiths affects the experience of all students. It includes the campus buildings and facilities that students interact with, the IT infrastructure, and student facing systems like the VLE.



The campus

There has been significant investment in the Goldsmiths campus over recent years, and there is an ambitious programme to continue this. Future development is outlined in the Estates Masterplan, and ensuring that this complements and improves the student experience will be achieved by:

- Working with students, both GSU and the wider student community, to understand students' current and future learning needs
- Embracing our heritage by investing in and improving our historic buildings
- Providing a campus that continues to build on our century-long reputation for innovation and creativity

The infrastructure

Our infrastructure affects everyone. The new Information Technology and Information Services Strategy sets out a plan to achieve state-of-the-art IT facilities and services. This will be integrated into the student experience by:

- Involving the student community in decisions about priorities for investment in the infrastructure and the planning for future requirements

Example:

Student Ambassadors are employed on the IT Help Desk and have daily input into IT services. They also worked at the start of term to help new and returning students connect to Eduroam quickly and easily.



“I loved that Goldsmiths was a small campus, it creates familiarity among everyone.”

Amina,
BA History & Politics

Student facing systems

Goldsmiths operates many systems that affect the student experience. These need to be effective, efficient and easy to use. This will be accomplished by:

- Working to best practice guidelines for design and workflows
- Consulting with the student community to gather feedback, and integrating this into the development cycle
- Training and supporting staff to effectively use the systems and tools that underpin the student experience, such as the Student Records System, the Customer Relationship Management system, the Library Management System, and Library resources
- Enabling staff to make full use of the VLE when providing all elements of the learning experience

Processes and procedures

There are various processes that a student will experience during their time at Goldsmiths - relating to, for example, admission, immigration, payment of fees, submission of coursework, and receiving their results. These processes will be effectively managed by:

- Ensuring fairness and transparency, adhering to best practice, and making processes as efficient as possible
- Designing these processes with students in mind
- Working with students to gather feedback and improve processes

Campus facilities

Students use facilities across the campus and remotely. These include halls of residence, catering facilities, prayer spaces, social study spaces, the Library, IT zones, and Club Pulse - the campus gym. Ensuring that these are fit for purpose will be achieved by:

- Measuring student satisfaction with service levels and acting on the feedback
- Developing processes to capture suggestions for new services
- Involving the student community in decisions about new services

Example:

Students requested more social learning spaces, proven to be a good way for people to learn. In response to this, Goldsmiths invested in a major reworking of the ground floor of the Rutherford Building (Library) to provide a new bank of social learning spaces.



Environmental impact

A focus on protecting and conserving the environment, and operating in a sustainable and ethical way, helps build a campus experience that students can be proud of. This is being achieved by promoting awareness of both corporate and individual responsibility to all students and staff. We've resolved to continually improve how we measure and minimise our environmental impact, by:

- Ensuring that none of Goldsmiths' waste goes to landfill: everything is either recycled or converted into energy via local 'waste to energy' plants
- Integrating environmental and sustainable principles into operational procedures, and promoting best practice at every level
- Recruiting carbon champions across departments
- Encouraging students and staff to use modes of transport that minimise greenhouse gas emissions and environmental impact

Example:

All food sold and served on campus is seasonal, locally and ethically sourced. Hundreds of products for sale at Goldsmiths bear the Fairtrade logo, ensuring that farmers and workers have decent working conditions and are paid a fair price for their goods.



Communication

Open and two-way communication is essential for students to engage with the whole Goldsmiths experience.

Communications with students

From the point of enquiring about studying at Goldsmiths right through to graduation, communications to students will be timely, structured, accurate and accessible. This will be delivered by:

- Clearly defining what information will be available and where it can be found
- Using state-of-the-art communication techniques, such as social media, to interact with students
- Publishing regular and relevant information, for example via the fortnightly student e-newsletter
- Developing the VLE as a key way to communicate with students
- Adhering to the recently updated Goldsmiths brand guidelines

Example:

Student News, previously issued on a monthly basis, is now sent out every fortnight. By devoting resource to this we have been able to increase communication to students.

Example:

During the development stages of the new Goldsmiths website, students were involved in early stage research and in development stage user acceptance testing, helping to shape the navigation and content of the new site.

Student voice and feedback

Goldsmiths captures feedback from students in a range of ways. This includes a series of surveys, both quantitative and qualitative, to measure student satisfaction. The surveys include:

- 'Just Joined' survey
- National Student Survey (NSS)
- Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE)
- Postgraduate Taught Experience survey (PTES)
- Postgraduate Research Experience survey (PRES)
- International and National Student Barometers (ISB/SB)
- Module Evaluation
- DSC Annual Project Survey
- DSC Termly and Annual Reports

These, together with ongoing feedback received through oral and written methods, provide a sound foundation for the continuous improvement of our services and the student experience. We will:

- Act on the outcomes of the feedback that demonstrate a shortfall against student expectations
- Develop a series of key performance indicators and metrics to both improve and measure the student experience
- Work closely with GSU and the DSC team to understand the student perspective
- Close the feedback loop by demonstrating actions taken and planned, through campaigns including 'You said: We did', 'In Progress' and 'Did you know?'



Student engagement

Student engagement is defined as the process by which Goldsmiths involves and supports students to meaningfully contribute to shaping their own learning experience. Working in partnership with students is central to this approach. Effective student engagement will allow Goldsmiths to adapt to and meet evolving student expectations.

Students are currently consulted through:

- Institutional level surveys (see page 16)
- Programme level surveys (module evaluations)
- GSU-led surveys
- DSC and student representatives actively gathering feedback
- Staff-Student Forums in each department
- DSC Annual Project initiative
- Representation on key committees, primarily through GSU Sabbatical Officer membership
- Themed all-DSC meetings, attended by relevant members of the senior management team
- Student focus groups

Student engagement in representation and decision making

Goldsmiths is at the very forefront of institutions when it comes to involving students in institutional decision making. A recent example of this is the pioneering step of including a student as a member of the Remuneration Committee. Meaningful student engagement in this area will be strengthened by:

- Coordinating a proactive and harmonised department-level DSC and programme-level Student Representation system, in partnership with GSU, that actively seeks out feedback from all students
- Formalising and standardising the process for Goldsmiths communicating responses to student feedback raised through the representation system
- Ensuring GSU Sabbatical Officers and students are represented and appropriately trained to participate in key decision making committees and review committees (eg Periodic Review Panels)
- Encouraging staff and students to engage in evidence-based discussions that draw from survey data, feedback reports and individual student contributions (eg Staff-Student Forums and Periodic Reviews)
- Encouraging student involvement in the planning and delivery of wellbeing events to ensure we are responding to the needs of our student community

Student engagement in their programme and enhancement

A fundamental component in ensuring a positive student experience is the successful and enthusiastic engagement and participation of students in their programme of study. We want to encourage positive and active participation, by:

- Communicating a clear expectation that students attend and actively participate in programme lectures, seminars and assessments
- Developing and operating a consistent and accessible mechanism for module evaluation within departments
- Actively seeking student input during the development of new programmes

Example:

In May 2015 GSU proposed various ways to diversify the curriculum. In response to these suggestions, several changes to the review of programmes have occurred: convenors are now encouraged to address diversity within the curriculum on an annual basis in their planning for future delivery, and academic performance has been broken down by student origin for the first time, and this data will be monitored with the aim of informing our planning. These changes came directly from student recommendations.

Monitoring, celebrating and communicating student engagement

Effective student engagement needs to be regularly monitored and widely communicated to the whole student community. This will be ensured by:

- Managing and evaluating activities through the co-owned student and staff Student Experience Sub Committee, including prioritising the outcomes that matter most to students
- Regularly and clearly communicating the ways that students can engage with Goldsmiths, through newsletters, web and online communications, representation structures, elections and information stands
- Ensuring that different types of students are encouraged to participate in the opportunities for feedback, input and participation
- Celebrating and rewarding student engagement by considering appropriate scholarships, HEAR, recognition and celebratory events



Action plan

This strategy is supported by a comprehensive action plan that will be monitored by the Student Experience Sub Committee and reported through the Committee structure on a regular basis.

Review

This Strategy will be reviewed annually by the Student Experience Sub Committee and the Senior Management Team (SMT).

References

Definition of student engagement (QAA, 2012: B5, page 7) (HEA, 2015: <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/workstreams-research/themes/students-partners>)

Equality & Diversity Strategy

Estates Masterplan

Goldsmiths Strategic Plan

International Student Barometer (ISB)/ Student Barometer (SB)

ITIS Strategy

Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy



*Goldsmiths,
University of London*

New Cross
London
SE14 6NW
United Kingdom