

MA Media and 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: MA Media and Communications

Name of Interim Exit Award(s):

Postgraduate Certificate in Media and Communications

Postgraduate Diploma in Media and 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

QAA Benchmark Group: Not applicable

FHEQ Level of Award: Level 7

Programme accredited by: Not applicable

Date Programme Specification last updated/approved: December 2020

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 MA Media and Communications offers a broad look at many aspects of the media – sociological, economic and cultural. It invites you to think critically about the larger, global media worlds of the present age, and about your own location in the mediated society in which you live.

Coursework is primarily theoretically based, so you will need some foundation in the (broadly conceived) intellectual arenas of the social sciences or the humanities in order to grasp the dominating aims and objectives of the programme.

Programme entry requirements

Students will normally hold the equivalent of an upper-second in the humanities or the social sciences and (if a non-native speaker) possess IELTS of 6.5, or equivalent. They will also

need to demonstrate a commitment to thinking reflexively and critically about the workings of contemporary media forms. It is not necessary for students to have an educational background in media and communications. Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the programme, a broad range of undergraduate backgrounds can be appropriate. In some circumstances we can also accept candidates with a degree in the sciences, or with expertise in more vocational areas. There is no requirement for students to have any practical experience of working in the media, though if they do have this, it will clearly be an advantage, and students will be encouraged to make use of their past experiences in this MA.

Aims of the programme

The programme aims to offer you a comprehensive, interdisciplinary approach to the field of Media and Communications. It aims to bring together the two dominating perspectives which currently organise the field of inquiry: on the one hand, the sociological or political-economy discussion of media institutions, with its characteristic emphasis on the social power of media organisations; and on the other, the domains of subjective identities in mediated societies, which draws more from the intellectual traditions of cultural studies. In so doing, we borrow from a range of different academic disciplines: sociology, anthropology, geography, psychology, literature and history.

The programme offers knowledge and skills specific to the study of the media. Its broadly conceived ambit, however, also allows you to engage in critical thought in its widest meanings, which is appropriate not only for future employment in the media industries but in many cognate areas of employment as well.

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 the media, understood in the widest sense, and to be able to justify their views intellectually and theoretically. This in turn helps students to grasp the range of intellectual traditions which organise the current field of media studies. In addition, students will also develop a wide range of transferable skills necessary for employment in a variety of different contexts, described by the Quality Assurance Agency as 'the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility, decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations, and the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development. We have asterisked all skills outcomes to indicate that we believe that they are all concerned with the development of transferable skills.

Students who exit the programme at the Postgraduate Certificate stage will demonstrate an ability to:

Knowledge and understanding

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
A1	Understand in depth at least two differing areas of inquiry	All Modules
A2	Understand one of the defining intellectual traditions of the field of media and communication studies	All Modules

Cognitive and thinking skills

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
B1	N/A	N/A

Subject specific skills and professional behaviours and attitudes

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
C1	N/A	N/A

Transferable skills

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
D1	The ability to work resourcefully	All Modules
D2	The ability to locate, retrieve and critically evaluate appropriate forms of information from a range of electronic or paper-based sources	All Modules

In addition to the above learning outcomes, students who exit the programme at the Postgraduate Diploma stage will demonstrate an ability to:

Knowledge and understanding

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
A1	Understand the role of media and communications in shaping historical and contemporary experience	All Modules
A2	Understand three of the defining intellectual traditions of the field of media and communication studies	All Modules

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
A3	Understand in depth at least two differing areas of inquiry	All Modules

Cognitive and thinking skills

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
B1	N/A	N/A

Subject specific skills and professional behaviours and attitudes

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
C1	N/A	N/A

Transferable skills

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
D1	The ability to work under pressure and to deadline, managing a complex array of competing demands	All Modules
D2	The ability to work resourcefully and methodically	All Modules
D3	The ability to locate, retrieve and critically evaluate appropriate forms of information from a range of electronic or paper-based sources	All Modules

Students who successfully complete the MA Media and Communications will have demonstrated achievement of all the above outcomes and, in addition, an ability to:

Knowledge and understanding

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
A1	Understand the defining intellectual traditions of the field of media and communication studies, in such a way that you can produce your own 'map' of the field	All Modules
A2	Grasp some of the key concepts that have informed academic debates within media and communications (such as	All Modules

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
	concepts of power, the public sphere, identity and community)	
A3	Appreciate how key debates in the field of media and communications are informed by a range of other academic disciplines	All Modules
A4	Understand the role of media and communications in shaping historical and contemporary experience	All Modules
A5	Understand in depth at least four differing areas of inquiry within this broader field	All Modules

Cognitive and thinking skills

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
B1	The ability to prepare and deliver coherent, persuasive and well-constructed academic argument in seminar papers, essays and in your dissertation	All Modules
B2	The ability to debate issues and viewpoints with insight and understanding	All Modules
B3	The ability to think critically throughout your exploration of the field	All Modules

Subject specific skills and professional behaviours and attitudes

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
C1	The ability to engage critically with major thinkers, debates and intellectual paradigms within the field of media and communications	All Modules
C2	The ability to examine media and communications with reference to the diversity of contemporary societies, and have an understanding of how different social groups variously make use of, and engage with, media and communications	All Modules
C3	The ability to grasp and apply the broad methodological issues which are	All Modules

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
	necessary for conducting research in the field of media and communications	
C4	An advanced level of conceptual, methodological and empirical knowledge appropriate for a sustained piece of original research in the field	All Modules
C5	An ability to evaluate their own work in a reflexive manner, with reference to academic debates and conventions	All Modules

Transferable skills

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
D1	The ability to debate issues and viewpoints with insight and understanding	All Modules
D2	The ability to work resourcefully and independently	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 different sorts of tutorials (with personal tutors and module leaders) student progress is carefully monitored, to make sure that they are making progress towards the achievement of the outcomes. An early, non-assessed diagnostic essay will also be used as an indicator of student progress, and will be used to identify any on-going problems. Different kinds of theoretical input and different kinds of information-retrieval are required for each essay. In consultation with tutors, students will be guided to the most appropriate intellectual approaches, and to the most appropriate archives, libraries or electronic sources. Much of the initial work of trying out ideas takes place in the seminars, where students construct a dialogue between themselves as much as with your tutor. (The varied intellectual and professional backgrounds of the students in each group come into its own at this point.) Here students have the opportunity to learn how to present your ideas succinctly, to discriminate between different traditions of critical thought, and also to listen to other, perhaps competing, lines of argument. By and large the optional modules are taught by the familiar mix of lectures, seminars and tutorials, although there are some variations. Some options offer a greater input of workshop organisation.

In preparing for the dissertation, all students will receive intensive one-to-one tutoring over a prolonged period, which allows you to devise your own original contribution to the field.

Most, if not all of the learning outcomes — from developing the capacity to map 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

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:

- One 1500 non-assessed review essay offering a detailed analysis of a recent journal article from one of two leading journals in Media and Communications.
- Two 2,500 word essays within a given fourteen-day period, which offers a different kind of test not only of your intellectual knowledge but also of your capacity to write coherently and persuasively in a (relatively) limited time-span.
- The dissertation (of 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.
- 5,000-6,000 word essays for each of the 30 CATs option modules, or 3,000 word essays for each of the 15 CATs options, assessing knowledge of a specialist area.

The compulsory "Introduction to Media and Communications Theory" module incorporates a non-assessed essay, due in Week 7, in which students will be asked to offer a review of a recent journal article (from either The International Journal of Cultural Studies or International Journal of Communication). All students will then be offered essay tutorials in the final week of the module to help them identify any areas of weakness they will need to work on for their option essays. This module is formally assessed by a fourteen-day take-away exam at the start of the summer term, in which students are required to produce two 2,500 word essays. We put this assessment at the end of the teaching year so that we test not only the compulsory module itself, in isolation, but also all the work of the taught option modules: this allows students greater opportunity to demonstrate they have created your own map of the field of media and communication studies.

Marking 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.
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

Mark	Descriptor	Specific Marking Criteria
		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.

How the programme is structured

Students are required to take one compulsory 30 CATs compulsory module: Introduction to Media and Communications Theory, which takes place in the autumn term. This is a formal lecture programme (combined with seminar and tutorials) which introduces the main intellectual traditions in the field, encouraging you to produce your own ‘mapping’ of the discipline. It draws from different disciplines to indicate the virtue of a wide plurality of approaches in coming to an understanding of the media. The module does serve as an ‘introduction’ — in that we assume that a number of the group will not previously have encountered media studies before coming to Goldsmiths. However, being an advanced module, with high expectations of students, we have to move fast. We work in the knowledge that students will normally have one or two intellectual ‘entries’ (from their previous undergraduate discipline) into the debates we introduce. Although we start from basics, by the end of the module we aim that students will possess a sophisticated grasp of what are complex theoretical traditions.

Attendance is compulsory for the Methods Workshops. There will be two methods workshops in the Spring term where you will discuss the dissertation topic you have chosen and the best way of approaching researching the topic. We will have guest speakers from professional agencies who will explain various research methodologies and their appropriate use.

Students are required to take 90 CATs worth of optional modules. 60 CATs of these must come from the home Department of Media and Communications, and up to 30 CATs can be taken from the Centre for Cultural Studies or the Departments of English, Anthropology or Sociology. The range of options on offer allows a deepening of the interdisciplinary objectives of the programme. If students, for example, are more inclined to a social science

approach to the media, then they can inflect your modules in this direction — both by the choice of options within the Department of Media and Communications, and by opting for a module in, for example, the Department of Sociology. If, on the other hand, students wish to adopt a more fully cultural route, you could choose the appropriate options within the Department of Media and Communications in combination with one from the Department of English, for example. But by working in conjunction with the compulsory module, we aim to provide students with the intellectual means to think these varying approaches within a broad interdisciplinary ambit. We are also careful to counsel you and your peers, often individually as well as in more formal meetings, about the particular routes you might choose through the programme.

All students are required to produce a Dissertation worth 60 CATs. Individual tutors are assigned early on in the Spring 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.

There is a compulsory Research Skills/Methods Training component; three lecture/seminars in the autumn term and four seminar/workshop sessions focusing on particular methods and their methodological implications, commonly used in media and communications research. Students are required to attend these sessions (attendance mandatory) that assists with the preparation of their dissertation. The aim of Research Skills Training is to provide basic understanding of what is expected of the master's thesis, research methodology and ethics as well as the practicalities of doing research. There will be three one-hour lectures in the autumn and four two-hour lectures/workshops in the spring. The first three sessions are designed to help students in formulating their research question and doing preliminary research, and to acquaint them with the structure of the dissertation as well as key ethical issues related to conducting research. The four sessions in spring are designed to give students basic methodological tools for researching the thesis.

Students awarded the Postgraduate Certificate will have passed modules to the value of 60 credits including “Introduction to Media and Communications Theory”.

Students awarded the Postgraduate Diploma will have passed modules to the value of 120 credits including “Introduction to Media and Communications Theory”.

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 compulsory module and 30 credits of optional modules.

Full-time mode

Module Title	Module Code	Credits	Level	Module Status	Term
Introduction to Media and Communications Theory	MC71045A	30	7	Compulsory	1
Optional modules equal to the value of 90 credits, chosen from an approved list published annually	Various	90	7	Optional	1-2
Dissertation	MC71044A	60	7	Compulsory	1-3

Part-time mode

Academic year of study 1

Module Title	Module Code	Credits	Level	Module Status	Term
Introduction to Media and Communications Theory	MC71045A	30	7	Compulsory	1
Optional modules equal to the value of 30 credits, chosen from an approved list published annually	Various	30	7	Optional	1-2

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
Dissertation	MC71044A	60	7	Optional	1-3

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 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. 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 [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.

Links with employers, placement opportunities and career prospects

The majority of students are either from overseas or from other parts of the European Union. A significant minority of these come to the programme by arrangement with their employer in their home countries, and return to their jobs on completion. A number of EU students, especially, elect to stay in London and seek work in the media industries here. Those who complete the programme go 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.

The requirements of a Goldsmiths degree

All taught postgraduate degrees have a minimum total value of 180 credits and involve one calendar year of full-time study. Some programmes may extend over more than one calendar year and, when this is the case, they have a higher total credit value. 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. Normally, 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 interim exit points of Postgraduate Certificate and/or Postgraduate Diploma, which may be awarded on the successful completion of modules to the minimum value of 60 credits or 120 credits respectively. The awards are made without classification.

When these awards are 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.

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](#).