

Four reasons why we have a Connected Curriculum at Goldsmiths



What is the Goldsmiths' Connected Curriculum?

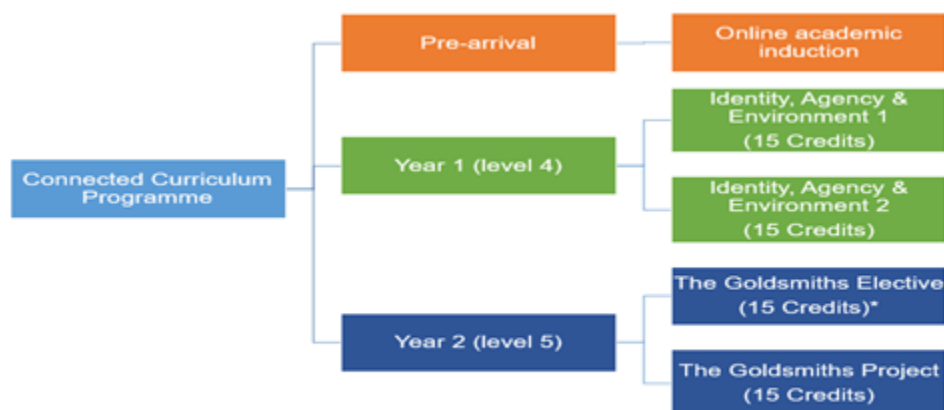
The Connected Curriculum is a series of interconnected modules which undergraduates across the university take during their first and second years.

During the first year, undergraduates from Departments which have opted into the Connected Curriculum take two modules:

- Identity, Agency and Environment 1: Everything is a Text, which focuses upon developing critical thinking skills by learning about how everything around us can be interpreted and analysed
- Identity, Agency and Environment 2: Researching our World and Lives, which focuses upon students learning research skills by learning about the environment and climate change

During the second year, students take an Elective module, where they can choose from a whole selection of different modules across the university, and also work in small groups on the Goldsmiths' Project in order to tackle a social, intellectual or environmental problem.

The diagram below shows how it is structured:



Level 5 delivery begins in 24/25

* Students can opt for "internal" programme specific modules in this slot

The Connected Curriculum brings together students from across the university

There are a lot of reasons for instituting the Connected Curriculum, but a central one is to bring together students from across the whole university to engage in systematic, engaged conversations about their own learning and the learning more generally at the university. In the Connected Curriculum, there is a focus upon getting students to teach each other what they know and understand of the world, and to listen to other students' opinions mindfully and in an emotionally literate fashion. This not only helps generate vital employability skills, but also widens minds to embrace learning beyond specific subject disciplines. So far, students have taken part in some amazing discussions in the first module, Identity, Agency and Environment 1: Everything is a Text. They've considered their own thoughts and feelings about being at university, talked about feminism, the importance of social action in the face of oppression, decolonising the curriculum, the role of Artificial Intelligence in the contemporary world.

To impart shared Goldsmiths' values and concepts

The Connected Curriculum is a place where Goldsmiths can impart the values and concepts its learning community believes in, not least its commitment to interdisciplinary learning. Staff and students have the opportunity to examine their own subject discipline in depth and relate it to wider learning and research. Significantly, academics from across the university share their research and suggest ways in which it is relevant to everyone. In the first module, this has provided students with a dazzling array of lectures, where they've heard from experts on contemporary art critiquing Damien Hirst's famous diamond studded skull, people's histories about the New Cross Fire, analysis of the film Barbie and Marxist analysis of cultural hegemony and much else. After listening to these lectures, students have unpacked these lectures, and related the content to their own concerns and disciplines, developing their critical thinking skills in the process. The point here is that they've been challenged to think differently about the world and to hone their own informed, analytical opinions about it. This approach creates new ways of thinking and innovative ideas, much of which we've seen in evidence in the seminars.

To encourage innovation in assessment

An innovative form of assessment has been developed for the Connected Curriculum whereby students can submit different forms of assessment for the module. They can submit:

- 1,000 word academic research project
- Or: 3-5 minutes of produced audio
- Or: edited song/music of 3 mins
- Or: a concept map consisting of images and words (approx. 500 words)
- Or: a poster aimed at a specific audience, consisting of images, diagrams and 250 words
- Or: a blog post of 750 words which could include original images, video clips, diagrams
- Or: 5-minute video (appropriately edited)
- Or: designed newsletter; leaflet/information sheet of 750 words + appropriate pictures/diagrams.
- Or: negotiated practical project with annotation of 500 words

The point here is that in the modern world, sometimes it is more important to be able to concisely and critically present information in multimodal forms (film, audio, photos/pictures etc) than it is to write an academic essay. Students have the choice, and can choose the assessment form that works best for them, working closely with their wonderful seminar tutors who have been trained to teach this assessment approach. Recently, the university has become an Adobe Campus, and is working closely with Adobe, the IT department and the library to deliver additional training sessions for using Adobe for the Connected Curriculum assessments. The college has recently appointed an Adobe Digital Skills Evangelist who will also assist considerably with this training.

To promote vital shared skills and content

The Connected Curriculum has been very carefully planned so that students achieve certain learning outcomes. These are outcomes which speak directly to the students.

These are the learning outcomes for Identity, Agency and Environment 1: 'Everything is a Text'
When you complete the module, you should be able to:

- 1 Engage critically with different theories of texts and account for the role of text in social worlds
- 2 Apply textual analysis to contemporary cultural debates
- 3 Collate evidence to support your ideas and arguments about a topic of your choice
- 4 Organize and structure an engaging presentation of your ideas in your own text
- 5 Reflect upon how your work in the module relates to your own aspirations and learning

For Identity, Agency and Environment 2: 'Researching our World and Lives' they are:

When you complete the module, you should be able to:

- 1 Investigate and critically evaluate effective sources of evidence to inform your research.
- 2 Demonstrate that you can reference your research appropriately, accurately & academically.
- 3 Draw informed academic findings from your research.
- 4 Organise and structure an engaging, academic presentation of your research.
- 5 Apply critical reflexive methods for constructive self-evaluation, and how you will plan-approach your learning progression.

These learning outcomes are ones which the university has agreed are core skills and approaches that students should learn in their first year of the university. The benefit of learning these skills in an inter-disciplinary module is that students develop their ability to understand their subjects in wider contexts but also communicate their learning to an eclectic community.