

Collective Change Making: A proposal

Steering Group of the Professors' Forum

28/04/20

The question: How can Goldsmiths put in place decision-making structures to best ensure that it is intellectually, educationally and financially fit for the future?

To address this question we propose a process that is democratic, inclusive and value driven, and which recognises the increasingly difficult financial situation we face. The proposed process is democratic as it opens up discussions across College which are aimed at reaching agreement via a transparent and inclusive process of 'collective change making'. The process outlined here is value-driven in its aspiration to articulate and advance a vision of the unique contributions that Goldsmiths can make in shaping the post COVID-19 higher education landscape, while at the same time strategically addressing the College's survival and sustainability.

Our Dual Challenges

We face two challenges that are related and need to be considered together:

Safeguarding College's Financial Standing, given:

- A financial deficit that has substantially increased due to Covid-19.
- Student intake that is difficult to maintain and may be substantially lower in 2020-21.
- Uncertain levels of government support and intervention from OfS.

Developing College's Vision, Values and Academic Standing:

- To provide outstanding levels of teaching and research excellence.
- To maintain Goldsmiths' academic, cultural and political strengths.
- To contribute to social, economic, political and environmental justice.
- To secure equality goals and fair treatment of all staff.

What Stands in the Way of Goldsmiths Meeting these Dual Challenges?

There are different views about the causes of the financial challenges facing the College and the fitness of its current decision-making structures to meet those challenges. The purpose of this proposal is not to argue for one view or another, but to suggest a process through which we can seek to agree collectively on what changes would best position the College to meet the financial challenges in ways that best accord with our values.

- Academic and professional services departments have already been required to take, and have taken in some cases, extraordinary actions to identify financial savings in proposed plans for 2020-21. In the absence of a consultative process to identify changes that can safeguard the College's future, taking further extraordinary measures risks undermining the College's values and academic standing.
- A key objection to 'Evolving Goldsmiths' was that it did not involve a consultative and deliberative process that engaged the Goldsmiths community. It did not invest and demonstrate confidence in the capacity of its staff to creatively identify and commit to changes to safeguard the College's values and academic standing. That is what this document

seeks to recover and rebuild: trust in each other through a process that involves acting like a community.

How Can We Engage in a Process to Address these Dual Challenges?

The process must be widespread and inclusive to discuss options and then agree to changes. It must go beyond town hall events, open meetings, information sessions and calls for ideas via email. It needs to be facilitated in ways that are respectful and deliberative, supported by evidence, and that involve listening and seeking to understand different interests and perspectives across the Goldsmiths community. At each step in the process, all proposals must be evaluated in relation to how they enhance our ability to achieve equality goals actively.

- The process must deliver a set of recommendations for change, developed by and across academic and professional services departments, that have widespread support and are reached through a transparent, fair and rigorous process.
- That said, in light of forecasts of an escalating deficit, a compressed process and timeframe are necessary, although it is recognised that staff are currently overloaded with the shift to online working and myriad personal, familial and professional obligations.
- Additionally, the process must take into account that meetings will need to be conducted online and so smaller, streamlined meetings are necessary.
- We have thus sought to propose procedures that are straightforward, streamlined and maximize potential avenues of meaningful participation on **an initial set of principles and framework**. It does this by engaging existing committee structures within departments (such as Teaching and Research).
- It calls for each department to appoint a **Change Rapporteur** (through a selection process of their choosing) to act as an impartial rapporteur and coordinator within and between departments and stakeholders.
- In sum, we propose a series of three cascading stages, plus a preparatory stage, that happen within, and then between, academic and professional services departments.
- The stages are cascading in that they are interrelated and involve an iterative process of consideration of options on management, teaching and research.
- At the end of the process, a set of proposals would be put forward to Academic Board and Council for consideration by September 2020.

Stage 0: Department Preparations and Information Sharing

SMT must share with departments all the necessary background information relating to College-wide budgets, financial modelling, recruitment and retention etc. so as to facilitate accurate fact-based strategic thinking.

- Departments would be requested to identify a Change Rapporteur and two additional representatives for Stage 1 and 2 meetings below. These could be drawn from relevant existing committees (e.g. department management team; learning and teaching; research) and different representatives could be chosen for each stage.
- To prepare for the interdepartmental meetings below, Change Rapporteurs and the additional representatives would be encouraged to seek input from other members of staff, for example, through departmental meetings or other routes.

Stage 1: Management

The first stage would involve developing our vision of Goldsmiths post-COVID-19, seeking agreement on whether and how existing or alternative management structures can support our values and vision. It would involve Departmental, Interdepartmental and then College-level meetings.

- **Inter-Department and Professional Services meetings:** Representatives from Academic Departments, under the lead of the Change Rapporteurs, would attend a meeting of their respective Schools; Professional Services Departments would organise a parallel meeting.
 - The first task for these meetings will be to articulate a broad and inclusive vision for Goldsmiths going forward. These meetings should take into account both the likely realities into which we will emerge and the values and aspirations we wish to embrace.
 - The meetings would also be asked to make recommendations about three main elements of Goldsmiths current management structure that the SMT have identified as problematic as they prevent the College from effectively responding to current and future challenges:
 1. **Administration:** The duplication of positions across 19 academic departments; relations between academic and professional services departments; inefficiency due to different and sometimes repetitive processes across College.
 2. **Management:** The varying experiences of effective leadership enabled by the current structure of Pro-Wardens and HoDs.
 3. **Finance:** The appropriateness of the current activity-based contribution (ABC) model; budgeting and decision-making processes.

Responses would be requested to the following questions:

- What is our vision of the future Goldsmiths? Should we continue as a research-intensive university, focus only on undergraduate education, develop alternative forms of delivery, or...?
 - Which elements of Goldsmiths management structure are problematic, what creates administrative inefficiencies, and what other key management problems need to be addressed?
 - What then are the possible solutions and improvements to management that could help achieve our vision (including consideration of the Schools structure)?
 - What changes can be made to management structures to address the equality deficit in the College?
 - How could these solutions and improvements to management structures protect financial stability while maintaining Goldsmiths' values?
- **College level meeting:** Reports prepared by Change Rapporteurs on the three main elements and management options to address them arising from the Stage 1 meetings would be considered at a meeting of the Goldsmiths Leadership Group (GLG) and with the College trade unions (including the Students Union). The output of this stage would be a set of options (not decisions) for a College vision and improvements to management, with GLG comments, as input for Stage 2.

Stage 2: Our Teaching and Research

This stage will involve reflection on feedback from GLG relating to our vision and management and consider them in relation to (1) Teaching provision, student experience, recruitment and retention; (2) Research, Enterprise and Knowledge Exchange, and (3) the Teaching-Research nexus.

- The process would roughly mirror that of Stage 1: interdepartmental meetings of representatives from relevant department committees and two professional services meetings, one on teaching and one on research. Departmental meetings could be arranged to consider the results of Stage 1 and to prepare for this stage.
- **On Teaching:** the meetings would be asked to address the following:
 - Build on synergies and intellectual compatibilities between disciplines.
 - Share teaching provision (e.g., modules across degrees).
 - Share student support (e.g., on mental health, work placements, study skills).
 - Develop new teaching and learning possibilities, for instance via interdisciplinary, theme-based institutes that can merge teaching and research.
- **On Research and Enterprise:** the meetings would be asked to address the following:
 - Support and strengthen Goldsmiths research culture including Research Themes, Centres, Units and Groups and interdisciplinary and large-scale bids and projects.
 - Research administration and support: Department – College roles and relations.
 - Research finance issues: Department – College allocations such as overheads.
 - Knowledge Exchange and Enterprise: how these are conceived, and the consultative structures through which they are to be led (including informed consideration of the new Enterprise Hub).
- Each meeting would produce recommendations for new initiatives against criteria of protecting financial stability while maintaining Goldsmiths' values and developing our vision. These recommendations would also consider how the management options from Stage 1 would facilitate or impede these aspects of teaching and research. All the above stages should incorporate means to actively identify and address equalities issues.
- **College level:** Reports from the above meetings would be considered at a meeting of the Goldsmiths Leadership Group (GLG) and with the College trade unions (including the Students Union). GLG would reflect on these discussions, state its position on the relation of the management options to teaching and research and an overall vision for Goldsmiths, and identify a consensus option that is best suited to meeting the dual challenges identified at the outset of this document, and feed this back to all departments for Stage 3.

Stage 3: Agreed Structure and Plans

A final stage of Departmental meetings will receive the results of Stages 1 and 2 and work through their implications for Departmental planning relating to management structures, teaching provision, student experience, and recruitment and retention.

- These meetings will agree a set of key recommendations, prioritising up to three specific changes in each area of **Management, Teaching** and **Research and Enterprise** that will demonstrably support each Department's ability to address financial stability and develop Goldsmiths' culture. All plans should positively engage with measures to rectify the equalities deficit in the College.
- The recommendations from these final departmental meetings will be considered by GLG, Academic Board, and by all campus trade unions, and then presented to Council in September 2020 as a set of proposals for collective change making.