

OPEN LETTER (for students to send individually)

Send to:

Frances Corner

Twitter: fcorner

Email: wardensoffice@gold.ac.uk / f.corner@gold.ac.uk

Dinah Caine (Chair of Goldsmiths Council)

Email: d.caine@gold.ac.uk

Goldsmiths Senior Management Team

e.hill@gold.ac.uk, j.court@gold.ac.uk, d.oswell@gold.ac.uk, s.edwards@gold.ac.uk,

i.chughtai@gold.ac.uk, m.cragoe@gold.ac.uk, s.graham@gold.ac.uk, a.carlile@gold.ac.uk

Dear Frances Corner, Goldsmiths Senior Management Team and Goldsmiths Council

We are writing as students to express our deep concern that, once again, managerial mishandling is pushing the tutors and administrators into Industrial Action.

The last year has been incredibly difficult for all of us. As students we have endured unprecedented illness, disruption to our study, difficult-to-follow messaging and we have been misled on a number of occasions by government and by Goldsmiths Management. The current student rent strike is a response to one aspect of this. In this letter we wish to highlight another - the conditions of the administrative, professional and academic staff.

Staff have provided a rudder through the turmoil of the last year. Admin and academic staff have gotten us through the worst of the pandemic. They have offered countless hours of tutorials, switched in a blink to online learning, counselled us on everything from travel to adapting our work to the online format. They have adjusted deadlines, even when this meant foregoing their summer holidays. They have worked while they and their family members were ill with the virus and its aftermath, while their children and family members were home and requiring care and when they were shielding from the virus. They have compensated for failures in campus technological infrastructures, generated social activities and, in many cases, risked their lives to teach us face to face.

We have therefore been repeatedly shocked to learn that Goldsmiths plans for restructuring - beginning with 'Evolving Goldsmiths' and now wrapped up as the 'Recovery Plan' - have been so resolutely focused on reducing staff numbers and negatively altering their working conditions - before the selling of property, before meaningful consultation with students, before exploring a range of other options. We believe this policy to be nothing but detrimental to students and want to say in the loudest possible voice, Not In Our Name! Administrative and academic staff are why we are at Goldsmiths, why we stay at Goldsmiths and therefore of the utmost value to

students. To undercut the conditions of these workers is to damage the identity of Goldsmiths, i.e. what attracts us to come and what holds us here.

We often hear about low NSS scores and other metrics like it in relation to the 'performance' of different Departments, but for many of us, our problems with Goldsmiths are with the values and practices of its management, which do not line up with our own, nor with the values we signed up to when we chose Goldsmiths. Prioritising financial and managerial approaches over democratic involvement of the people most involved in the operation of the university, is the real failure of Goldsmiths at the moment.

We were, for example, deeply troubled when Goldsmiths management threatened to take the rash decision to discontinue contracts of over 300 of our most valued tutors this past summer, and subsequently slashed AL and GTT budgets, and when they did not replace several of the Departmental Business Managers upon whom we rely. These absences have had a significant impact on the student experience we hear so much about. Many of us lost mentors who had shepherded our work, we lost module content that we were relying on and we lost relationships with tutors and administrators with whom we had formed bonds of trust.

Students of colour were particularly affected by these cuts, as tutors with capacity to relate to their life experiences were disproportionately cut. In the wake of these decisions - that resulted in many of our much loved staff being cast to the side in the middle of a pandemic with few job prospects - we have watched our permanently contracted tutors take on additional work. We have seen them grow wearier as the workloads expand, while continuing to support us with online learning and the endless technological issues we encounter.

As students we have stayed the course, we have not dropped out en masse, we have adjusted to the changing conditions, shoddy infrastructure and disingenuous communications coming from senior management, and we have appreciated all of the work that tutors and administrators have put in to ensure that we continue to receive a quality education. We would therefore expect that the Goldsmiths management join us in applauding this work and not use this moment to engage in a large-scale restructuring, adding further pressure to staff, and suggesting that it is they and not poor management decisions that have led to the current crisis.

We appreciate that the financial situation is difficult and we are happy to join in conversations about the solutions that lie ahead, we have in fact been requesting this for over a year, but to take decisions that will have unprecedented impact on student experience without involving us or the tutors and administrators that are holding all of this together is as misguided as it is cruel.

We hear about the importance of student experience but cannot, under any circumstances, believe that a major restructuring, rushed through in the midst of a pandemic and without meaningful student input, could result in anything but a steep decline. We know that our tutors are engaging in industrial action with heavy hearts and would like nothing more than to get on with the real work of the university - teaching and learning, as would we.

We therefore urge you to meet their demands of no redundancies and a stop to the cost-saving measures introduced last summer. Failure to do so will worsen the student experience and cause us to lose faith, launch complaints, terminate and postpone study, further jeopardizing the financial position of the university.