

Anders 0:01

My name is Anders. I am Danish but an international student so I've grown up around Europe, gone to international schools, took a gap year after finishing high school. Then I did a foundation here in Bournemouth University, went to St. Andrews for a year up in Scotland, realised that I wanted to pursue the creative industries more. I got rejected at CSM, but they put me into this kind of pull up applicants for good portfolios that weren't right for that degree. And then the current course that I actually am at, called Art Direction, saw my application. It was a completely new course I didn't even know about it. So I hadn't applied, but then they offered me a spot and that's what I ended up accepting.

Anders 0:44

I've been here three years but also took a year out last year and went back home, just worked at a restaurant and tried a few things. I really got a lot out of it, built up some motivation to come back and to take on third year because that's the one that really matters.

Academic Support 1:00

So what are the things that have made you nervous or excited about studying at UAL?

Anders 1:07

I guess, one of the biggest challenges has been figuring out what my place is, because, with Art Direction the course I'm doing, it's not very black and white. We're the first year of this course, and everyone in the course is very different backgrounds and like motivations. So that's a positive in a sense, because no one's competing and we're all helping each other. It's more of a colleague kind of feeling instead of a competitor kind of feeling. But also it means we've really been challenged to question a lot of things, especially I feel in a very political critical sense, which has been challenging but also rewarding. However, I do feel at times, I would have liked to just have more practice and gain more skills, maybe have a few more boundaries to work with, whereas we've been given a lot of freedom. And I had an experience last year with my year out, where I had an interview at a really cool design agency in Copenhagen. And they really liked my portfolio. But they also felt that I did lack a lot of the basic skills that you just needed at an intern level. Whereas I was more into the whole big thinking art direction part of it, which, obviously, people at the top of the agency are responsible for. So I didn't get that because of that. And I've kind of realised I needed to accrue more skills this year.

Anders 2:26

At times in London, it feels almost like overwhelming, how many things are going on and how much energy is required just to do basic things like transport or shopping or just getting a part time job. And like, to be perfectly honest, I wasn't hoping to come to London, because for me, I felt, especially at a bachelor's level, it would have been much nicer to have a more manageable city to navigate and live in.

Academic Support 2:49

What would you advise yourself when you approached first year? What would you advise yourself now on managing the city?

Anders 2:55

I think the dorm kind of approach to first year is a good idea. I refused because I'd already been in dorms twice and was so tired of it that I kind of went straight to living on my own, which kind of skipped the very important experience of just meeting people outside of your course - other first years who are kind of there for the first time. And then eventually, I guess as many people find houses with each other and then move out and then have that house experience in London, which I think is the alternative to having a campus experience. I kind of went straight to live on my own and then have lived with random people from London for three years, which is very much a mixed bag of people. But seeing some of my friends how they've kind of navigated their time. Some of them were just really lucky with people they found and lived with. Others, they had friends from before uni that they ended up with. Some have just stayed in the dorm life the whole way through. I think there's pros and cons to all of it. You just have to know yourself and know what your priorities are. Mine were definitely being close to Uni, so I've always lived more or less in the vicinity.

Anders 3:58

You learn about yourself in many ways at this age no matter what you study. So yes, that is very mixed into the whole educational experience so just the life experience of being young adults and going through certain experiences and learning about them more.

Academic Support 4:16

On your course, how do you sort of manage your time?

Anders 4:19

I'm not sure I'm the best example. I think others are better at creating a plan and sticking to it. Whereas mine is a much more, go with the flow situation, spending some days 10 hours in the library, without even looking up from the screen and just working on one thing. And then others day completely just lost walking around London with the camera or something. And then in the end, somehow putting it all together into a project.

Anders 4:43

I've also had the luxury of not having to have a part time job while I'm studying. So I've worked back home or just had savings. So, I think it's the question of what you need to do to survive and then just your own style of working which, again, is a case of trial and error, and just getting to know yourself best.

Academic Support 5:01

And if you were to get any support, give me some examples of good support you've had.

Anders 5:07

There's definitely times where I felt very alone and lost and where my only support was the other people in the course, like my friends, who felt the same thing and just kind of talking about it was helpful. Or, I guess family and friends back home as well, even though they can't fully relate to situations at UAL. I've heard great things about Academic Support, but I've never tried it personally. My course leader, she's been very great. And she's really taken it upon herself to do a lot of different roles.

Academic Support 5:39

Give me an example of a collaboration, and how, give me one that's sort of gone really well and maybe talk about why it didn't go well as well.

Anders 5:48

So, one collaboration that didn't go well was, I chose two of my best friends, and then there's a new student who was a transfer who also joined us. My chemistry with my friends was great but I also realised friends aren't always the best people to work with. And then it just happened to be that me and the new person, we just did not see eye-to-eye. And that was really bad chemistry and just communication broke down eventually. And we all kind of went our separate ways and cut up to project into four. And it just did not turn out very good. And I think that was a case of maybe egos crashing. Also because we're four art directors collaborating, so there wasn't a natural authority. We're all supposed to lead each other. And I guess it would have made more sense to collaborate with other courses. Which leads me to my second project, which I guess was a success, which was a collaboration with the photography students. It was two art directors and four or five photography students. And the subject matter was in something called Anthropocene, which a lot of us had issues with, for different reasons. But that collaboration actually ended up being very good because we kind of just saw the project for what it was and made fun of it in a sense, and created something very original and interesting at the end and within the group we had peer critique of saying how we experienced the collaboration went.

Anders 7:04

Some of my favourite sessions have consistently been the workshops we've had because it's just been very isolated in a sense. You just have someone come in, give a small talk, set things on the table that you then just have to play with, and then create something. I've definitely valued those experiences and some of, I feel, my best ideas or projects have come out of those experiences because it's not thinking too much but just doing. And also then you afterwards you go around and you see whatever else made it and you see the different kind of ways to get different places and how quickly sometimes a good idea can be formulated under the right circumstances. Yeah, we had one recently which was a smell workshop. So it was a professional perfumer, called Aaron Murphy and he came in with different samples of smell. Some are perfumes, some are more like detergents. We didn't know what they were, but we each got one and then we had four hours of just smelling our own example, to create something. I ended up making this kind of facetious brand called Unicorn Sweat, and some others, they made this more like artsy video, some made soundscape, some made images, and then we just looked all at the end.

Anders 8:11

I think an important part of university is also failing. And then realising afterwards, maybe once it's too late with that specific project, but then you bring on those experiences to the next project. So, for example, before I had two collaborations in a row, first one friction came up with someone where communication broke down, and we ended up handing in something could have been a lot better. And then I realised for the second project with photographers that I shouldn't, I guess, be too dominating or, like, let my own vision take force. And I kind of let go more, sort of experimenting with other ways of leading or directing. And I think they were much

more positive even though it did feel at times, like I didn't know what I was doing and things were just going really badly. In the end, we actually ended up with something great. So I adapted my approach. And yeah, it became a success. And currently I'm working on a other collaborative project, which is actually the first one I feel like we're perfectly matched. So I think sometimes it's also just a question of finding the right person to work with communication. There's always going to be different opinions and different visions of the project. But as long as you don't let other things get in the way and you can talk honestly about it, then at least you know where each each person stands. So you aren't operating completely different directions and at each other's kind of cost. I think it depends on what type of collaboration and what strengths and weaknesses you already have, what you're going to learn. But that's been my challenge, I guess.

Academic Support 9:43

And can you give me an example of research you have done and explain good experiences of doing research?

Anders 9:51

I think one of the best metaphors for research I've heard in a creative context is the wider you go into beginning without trying to like guide your research too much and just having a lot of weird, more obscure things possible, and eventually narrowing it down to find some middle point between all these obscure kind of references to find new perspective on something that's already been said a lot. Because if you have too many preconceptions when you're starting your research before brainstorming, and then you end up probably with something cliché or generic.

Anders 10:25

What I've tried to do is let go of having too many preconceived ideas. So, for my dissertation project, one of the reasons I also took the year out between second or third year was to properly research it because I didn't want to just pull references, I wanted to actually read books and understand them and let the knowledge kind of inform itself instead of me cherry picking something. So, that was a great decision from my part, I think, because I actually got to really engage with a lot of books that I've been wanting to read. And I found a thread between all the books I've been reading over the last three years and I kind of wanted to figure out what that thread was so I took the time to re-read and write up quotes and create a narrative and that has really helped inform my personal philosophy, so that's affected my creative approach to things, and that was very book heavy research. And I guess just looking at peers work, photos, books, I guess anywhere because with the internet you can really find anything. So I guess it's just about having an open mind and realising that anything can be research even if it's on some street corner or in some... my friends have said British Library is a really good place as well.

Academic Support 11:34

Have you had anytime you got caught stuck in your research and needed help, and was support easily accessible?

Anders 11:42

I guess I didn't look in the traditional channels for support. But I have heard that, again, Academic Support are good at making themselves available and always

there. I just never made that effort. But when I have needed support in my studio projects, my course leader has been really great and always willing, when she's able, to take a small tutorial with me. And sometimes you also realise that there's different advice for every situation. So there's also such a thing as bad advice, because people just come from different perspectives. And sometimes you just have to follow your own instinct and keep going even though you might feel like it's failing or you're not sure what you're doing. So, I guess there's also some wisdom to just being your own best support mechanism.

Academic Support 12:30

How has diversity and inclusivity perhaps played a role at UAL?

Anders 12:36

Well, I come from a very diverse background because I went to international school. So I guess it wasn't a new experience for me to come to a very diverse university. And one thing I liked about LCC is it's a more down to earth kind of student body. I do wish sometimes we'd had more projects, even Student Union events, where you got to meet other people

Academic Support 13:00

Have you been to the other sites?

Anders 13:02

I've been to Camberwell once, Chelsea once and CSM a couple of times. And they're all very different. I'm sure they have the same core philosophy in many ways. But campus wise, they definitely feel different. And obviously, the student body is, in a very discernible way, a different student body, even though you can visit each site. I think people find the ones that they prefer to go to and use those libraries or yeah have their own studios. So you don't necessarily, even though it's available, go to all the different colleges. I've become very familiar with LCC. And the only reasons I've gone to the CSM was either to the student bar or because that's where I happen to have some meeting with some collaborators or something like that.

Academic Support 13:47

I have one more question.

Anders 13:48

Okay.

Academic Support 13:48

You obviously learned a lot from the four years you've been here?

Anders 13:51

Yes.

Academic Support 13:53

What would you do differently?

Anders 13:55

Get out of my head more and just go into the workspaces. And with all the technicians, they're super helpful and just do random things and play around more, especially in the first two years, where you have the opportunities to do so without really having to be too afraid of grades or failing. Yeah, talking to random people that you see in the workspaces and not being too serious, I guess, about making it or letting your ego get the better of you and just kind of go in the flow a bit more. Yeah.

Academic Support 14:24

Thank you so much for your time and your feedback. So it's been a pleasure.

Anders 14:28

Thanks a lot.