

Student Voices transcripts: Rajinder 2020

Rajinder – Interview

Rajinder 0:00

So I'm Rajinder I'm on the MA applied imagination course, part time mode, which is for two years. I'm now in the second year, and will be finishing in December this year.

Academic Support 0:14

Tell me a bit about how you got to come to UAL.

Rajinder 0:17

Okay, so I'm a mature student. My background is graphic design. I've been working in industry for many years. I have three children and they are now independent. So, I felt I had some time that I could spend on myself and I reached a point in life where I thought it's time to do the things that I wanted to do for myself.

I grew up in the Midlands, and I applied to do graphic design. I was offered a place at Central Saint Martins but unfortunately was not able to come. I had to go to a local university that I could travel to every day. I had reached a point in my career. I felt like I wanted to do something different as well having done graphic design for so long. And in the end, after I'd visited CSM, I just felt like this is where I wanted to be. I just loved the vibe here, and the energy and the creativity. It's so inspiring. I came to the Applied Imagination... well, I actually didn't come on an Open Day I came for an evening. And it was just amazing, you know, the conversations that we had. I just came away so excited. I remember that moment and thought, this is it...this is what I want to do...this is where I want to be. It didn't involve being part of my game plan. But, you know, sometimes you got to throw it all up in the air and then just see where it lands and then I guess that's what I'm doing.

Academic Support 1:45

What was it like when you arrived? How did you feel coming back into education?

Rajinder 1:52

I was very nervous, you know, I'd been out of education for so long, to be a student again was kind of daunting. But more than that, was actually very exciting. It is when you're at the start of something can there's the whole prospect of a horizon ahead of you and.. and it felt like that just straight away, you know the buzz of being here. I know that last year, it got the second best in the world. To know that, you know, the future top creatives are passing through here. And I was one of them, in fact. So, I have a great imposter syndrome. And I just think that, you know, I'm here.

(2.30) And then excited for the work. I hadn't had this kind of a brief before. So, it was great kind of getting involved. We were put together with different teams through the year. And that was great. So, you get to know more people. There was just a very energised experience. Yeah.

The academic side is quite challenging. I was quite nervous, but it was ..it was very easy to get into because the support is there, if you go and look for

it and you explain your situation. This is an academic institution, teachers, tutors, fellow colleagues, we all understand that there's a process in learning.

(2.31) We were put together with different teams through the year. And that was great. So you get to know more people. There was just a very energised experience. Yeah. And the academic side is quite challenging. I was quite nervous, but it was ..it was very easy to get into because the support is there, if you go and look for it and you explain your situation. This is an academic institution, teachers, tutors, fellow colleagues, we all understand that there's a process in learning.

And sometimes if you don't get it, it just means a case of a conversation or direction given to you to go and find whatever the answer is that you're looking for. I've been using the academic support workshops that are available, you know, I found those very helpful, and that helped me to get back into the flow of being a student and the kind of work that's expected and the levels that are expected and...and what's expected from you as well. I think being, you know, a very well-regarded academic institution, I think that maybe students here. I think they expect a lot of themselves and think that that the university will just expect a lot of them. And yes, that is true, but the guidance is there and it's a natural thing, you know, not to have that natural confidence. And but that comes, you know, through time, I think that comes.

Academic Support 4:00

What else? Oh, yes, collaboration. Tell me about what collaboration means to you and how it works within your course.

Rajinder 4:05

Collaboration is a big part of the first year. within the course itself. We set briefs and some briefs, we are expected to do individually. And some briefs were deliberately put into groups. And, you know, you get a chance to work with different people on different projects. And the cohort is international. So, I love that you're mixing and working with students from around the world. And what that diversity brings different work ethics, different, you know, insights into things and different ways of doing things. And I think that can only be good. Yeah, so that collaboration really helps and, in a way, it helps as well into... in developing you as a person. And that's where your confidence grows. Because, you know, obviously, when you're first put in a group, right at the beginning of the year is daunting, you don't know how you're going to be perceived and how...you know, and the perceptions you have of other people as well. I mean, that changes, because you start to see things for really what they are and, and it's just a lovely process. So that's in the collaboration in the course itself. What I do like is that actually, you've got all the other areas that you can pull on if you need to. For instance, in my course, you know, we've got students from all creative disciplines on the course and so collaborating with them in their creative disciplines is quite interesting.

Then, through the facilities at the university, you know that you can tap into, so...say if you wanted to do something photographically or make a movie or you know, digital, it's all there, you know, and it's just up to you to go and make the connection where you need it.

Academic Support 5:47

Sometimes collaboration can be hard. When you talk about people with different work ethics or different approaches or different personalities. How do you cope with and deal with the challenges that come up through collaboration?

Rajinder 6:01

I mean, collaboration is hard. It's quite funny because my best friend on the course now actually... we were put together on a first project. And I didn't realise this, but he told me recently, he said, he felt that there was something negative between us, and I think that our ideas clashed, but I didn't... I wasn't aware of it. I think maybe when I had come and I had felt like, you know, this is the idea I wanted to go down and he'd felt that that's the idea he wanted to go down and I think you know, it took a good few weeks to kind of get into the flow of it. We're actually, really good friends now. Yeah, so I mean, collaboration is an eye opener and you don't know where it's gonna go. And that's the beauty of it, I guess.

Academic Support 6:44

Perhaps we can move on now and talk about lockdown. What was it like the first few days when you suddenly realise things were going to be very different.

Rajinder 6:55

Because there was a lot of unknowns about how long or what shape the course was going to take in that period, it did take a few weeks to find out how the lessons were going to be carried out online. So we've been having digital sessions... so Tuesday evenings is when we have our sessions. So you know, the education has still carried on, and our work has still carried on. So the tutors are there. I guess in some ways, things haven't changed. It's just taken...it's just moved to a different platform. What has changed is that interaction and being a creative course I think, and also creative person, I think that that is the thing that I guess we're all missing. When you walk into CSM or any UAL site, you just feel that creativity and that energy. And actually, I'm really missing that. Yes, it's all working. But I mean, yes, there are things like that, that I ...that we are missing, and we can't wait to get back and be a part of.

Academic Support 7:58

In terms of technology, have you had any challenges dealing with the online environment? Maybe time zones or connectivity or ... all those sorts of things?

Rajinder 8:11

I mean in my group, which is quite a small group, we're all pretty much UK-based. I know that ...I do get a sense that the tutors are actually quite pushed in terms of having to work with students from different time zones. And I can see that I can see the challenges that they must face as well. So it's not ideal, and especially in a creative course. You know, and I think for those who did graduate this year, not having a degree show, you know, for them, it's like their showpiece. And yes, it's quite sad that they didn't have that. We will be having ours in December. So I think that actually, we're quite lucky that we'll be okay.

Academic Support 8:54

What about time management, and the change that is inevitable when you're isolated in that way. How's that been?

Rajinder 9:01

Well, the thing is because I'm a mature student, and I've worked and I'm still working. So I'm juggling work and my studies, I'm actually in a good position because I've been made to work from home and now that I'm set up from home, I find that actually I have a bit more time to be able to sort of stay on top of my work and then fill the gaps with this. So because I'm working in the same space, it makes it easier. Whereas before, it was all very sectioned, so I'd go to work, then I'd leave work on the evenings and have to travel all the way in and then do my sessions and then go home, and then find time to actually do the extra bits that we need to do the research and so on. And so I find it a lot easier. But all that travelling's gone out the window, so I get a lot more time. And in terms of time management, I'm a morning person anyways, I do get up early, it's a nice quiet time for me. But you do have to make a conscious effort to have some sort of plan, to kind of help you schedule in knowing where you need to be and how you're going to break down what it is you're doing. So, you have your little targets that you need to keep aiming for, for a certain period. And I think that's always important to have...

Academic Support 10:20

That is really impressive that you're doing your work and your...Do you have any of your kids at home still have they all left?

Rajinder 11:00

So my kids are not kids, they're they're older. I have a son who's going to be 25 on Monday, actually. He's done his degree, he's done a Master's, he's worked. He's always wanted to be in the army. So, he's just been away to Afghanistan and come back. He's back home now. So we'll be working face to face with each other on our table from Monday. I have another daughter who's 21 and she's second year at university and another daughter who's 18, who's hopefully going to go away and study as well in September.

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Academic Support 10:58

How interesting how's that been? When you're all studying? What's that been like?

Rajinder 11:01

Umm my 18 year old likes to say to me 'Mum, well have you done your work? Mum, why are you procrastinating?' You know, it's kind of the tables have turned and... but they're very supportive and you know they know how much I wanted to do this. So that they look after themselves, when I need to do what I need to do. Yeah, we work as a team.

Academic Support 11:27

Fantastic. Is there anything else that you feel it would be really good for somebody thinking of coming here, to hear? Any thoughts that you can offer? Just reflections from your experience?

Rajinder 11:240

Well, I mean, I would say if you're interested in coming to UAL, I would not let anything hold you back. Yes, there are insecurities and yes, it seems very daunting..and, you know, I would not let anything put you off. any insecurities put you off from having that experience. You've got to just do it.

Academic Support 12:08

And also in this term of uncertainty, it is unlikely that everything is going to be face-to-face for the foreseeable future, so given that uncertainty is there anything you would recommend in terms of an approach, to what's happening.

Rajinder 12:22

Well, I think, with the uncertainty, you can only look at it as a positive. I think the hard ...the worst part has gone through. And so, it will only keep getting better. And in some ways, it may be even better because it's kind of shook things up a bit, you know. And in some ways that could work. For instance, for someone like myself, you know, I did used to struggle having to go to work, and then leave at a certain time and then get to University have my lecture, when some of those lectures maybe if they were online, could have been more practical for me. So, there's always something good that comes out of it. And I've seen that the university has addressed everything and it's jumped at it and ...and I have faith that it will be okay.

Academic Support 13:47

It's been really interesting talking to you, and I just really wish you every success. Any ideas what you want to do afterwards?

Rajinder 13:22

I'd love to teach. I'm thinking of doing the PG cert at UAL. 'Cos like I said, I love it here. And as far as I'm concerned, creatively wise, this is the centre of the universe for me. And I just want to stay here as long as I can.

So, I feel like even with my studies at the moment, there's just so much more and I want to dig even further and see where the project takes me as well. Like, you know, I don't know where actually I'm taking it right now. It's a mystery but I have an idea and see if that all unfolds. So, I don't know. Let's see.

Academic Support 13:52

Well, very best of luck.

Rajinder 13:58

Thank you.

Academic Support 14:00

Thank you for talking

Rajinder 14.00

That's alright.