

Vincent 0:00

My name is Vince. I'm studying Innovation Management at Central Saint Martins. And it's been roughly around like, four to five years since my undergraduate. So I did economics at Sussex University, and worked in marketing. And then I had a startup called Manish, then worked for my friend startup. And during that time, I wanted a new challenge. And then I came across this course at CSM back in 2013. But I was really interested in doing it, but I wasn't too sure. Then 2017 came up, then I was like, yeah, let me give it a go. And I go into the course. So that's my journey since then. But a lot of experimentation, a lot of uncertainty, a lot of ups and downs during that time, but I think the CSM has kind of cemented it to know where my, I guess further purpose is.

Academic Support 0:50

So maybe take you back to before you came? What were your fears and your hopes then? What did you think it was going to be like?

Vincent 0:58

Yeah, that's a very good question, Victoria. I guess for me, I had a lot of friends that were into creative arts. And they always saw how Central Saint Martins and UAL have such a name. Sussex is quite a political arty university as well. So it wasn't completely different. It wasn't... I wasn't put out my comfort zone. I had these ideas that it was completely experimental, that a lot of great fashion designers went there. And also, you know, some people used to say it was quite snobby. I do my thing. You do your thing. But when I started a course, it was completely different to work for it was. There is that kind of personalities there, but I wouldn't say that everyone is like that. And so the kind of preconceived notions I had were just that really, but since doing the course, it's completely reversed. I'm much more positive. Yeah.

Academic Support 1:50

What were your concerns, or were your hopes, about studying? What did you think you'd struggle with and what did you think you'd really excel at? And how has that turned out?

Vincent 2:00

Yeah. So I did economics, which is based on maths, and business, and a lot of economic modules and calculus, and all sorts of maths. And my writing expertise wasn't really pushed. During that, we already wrote about three to four essays, and probably five, during the whole three years, so I wasn't too sure about my writing coming to the course, and the type of cultural language I was using. So I was kind of worried about that, and when I started, you know, my worry came true. And I had to learn how to write an essay. Again, I had to learn how to critique and potential, you know, arguments and how to develop an argument. I remember my first essay... actually, my second essay was about Grime music because Grime music there isn't a lot of literature on, but I was using tons of like, newspaper articles, like Daily Mail and Guardian. And then... I got a bad mark for that. But what my critique about how I wrote essays, you know, you can't use tons of newspaper articles to reference because it isn't academic. I just thought, you know, Harvard referencing, surname, year, will be enough. But those are the basic kind of examples I'm talking about in terms of not knowing what to use or what to argue for within writing, say, I've learned

so much. I'm currently writing my my last..., or dissertation, we do two journals. I'm getting good feedback so far but that's been the kind of biggest challenge.

Vincent 3:30

It hasn't been a challenge in terms of creating or experimenting. That's not been my challenge at all, then, you know, I'm quite daring for that, to say the least. I haven't had an official text for dyslexia. And I have some kind of inhibition that I might have it. And what that means is that maybe you have a short attention span, or you find it hard to read for long hours. And that is me. So, my writing took a while kind of get used to. But what I realised is that I was able to write well or writes intensively for subjects I was really interested in. And so what I would say is, for students are coming in and realising well, I have to write an essay, again, just make sure you do two things, you choose a topic that you're really interested in, and just read like, things about critical critical thinking and how to write an essay and all them kind of self help books. Because that's why I did. Those are the two kind of ways I did it. And just reading in general, actually. Reading ... people don't really realise what reading helps you write in in so many ways. But I didn't... it wasn't like a simple equation for me, it was like 'oh wow, I'm getting better at writing from reading so much within the subject I'm studying'.

Vincent 4:42

And people think art is, you know, painting all sorts of other things, drama, all sorts of... you know, the basic creative arts. But writing is a form of art. Poetry I guess, is probably what you would associate with writing as an art, but writing an essay is a form of artistic discipline. And so once you kind of put that in your head that it's artistic what you're doing, and it's not late at nights, Red Bulls in the library, why am I doing this? Think of it as an artistic form, and then kind of help you on the journey.

Academic Support 5:16

And how has the writing and the reflection and the reading informed you and your ideas and your work?

Vincent 5:23

Oh, wow. I'm, so I'm currently studying mental health and behavioural design, which is like, designing on people's choices. It's based on an idea called choice architecture. I guess for me, like, reading and writing has allowed me to be become more critical. If I'm having to be more critical in my writing, that means I'm gonna have to critique other people's writing. And so taking the face value of someone's opinion, shouldn't be what you do, you should always ask questions around it. You should ask them, what are you basing it on? And if the argument is a one line, like, oh, I don't know, a dog with brown hair can only have brown hair, because he was born in Nepal. But what's that mean? Yeah, okay, why? What's the origin of the dog species within the Nepal, etc, etc, etc. And so that's how writing and reading has helped.

Academic Support 6:27

And then the other side, you mentioned was more the practical experimental side. Can you talk a bit more?

Vincent 6:33

Yeah. So, I call myself an extroverted introvert, which basically means like, I love talking to people. But when I want to create, I need to kind of be by myself. I've done a various amounts of creative exploration. I've made a few short films. But I've been part of the drama society. And I've helped some people with their fine art projects, done a few events. So I've done a lot of stuff that has taken me out of my comfort zone. And one thing I want to say today was, the creativity is solely kind of based on collaboration, there's no such thing as an original idea, you get inspired by people around you. And so for me go into all these these societies or joining in these projects and going to these events, I was able to become inspired. And being inspired and from my artistic practice as well the biggest thing I'll say to anyone wanting to come to UAL is just be ready to kind of experiment, and not be afraid to experiment, and not be afraid to fail. And don't be afraid of the uncertainty that comes with it as well. And because it's all an opportunity to develop something for your next step.

Academic Support 7:44

Can you just talk a bit more about failure and taking risks?

Vincent 7:48

Yeah, so I had a social enterprise, which was targeted towards young men, back in 2016. And it was going really well, we did a lot of stuff with the local community, we had an event at Dalston Roof Park. And we worked with ITV as well, a few other things. But it didn't go to plan, because many reasons. So essentially, it failed. And when I was going to start off, I was scared, it was going to fail as well. But I went and did it. So I guess the biggest learning curve for me was that if I never went and experimented with it at all, I wouldn't be a CSM, I think that helped my application to get in. So I say that failure is an opportunity. Because whatever we are doing, that doesn't go to plan, there's still something to learn from it. And I know we've been that time was like, Oh my gosh, I failed or you know, I want to talk to know and anytime to myself, you have to always look at failure as an opportunity. That's my biggest thing, failure. And uncertainty is all around, that's what we do in my courses, or we look at uncertainty in terms of how being unsure is going to allow you to explore ideas is going to allow you to ask why. So I welcome that... although some days I'm like... oh gosh.

Academic Support 9:02

What were the other things that you wanted to talk about?

Vincent 9:04

I, being in my gym kit now, I kind of wanted to talk about how I learned that diet and exercise was quite like my anchor. It allowed me to kind of stay grounded, stay healthy, stay excited, stay mentally well all I was doing at CSM, because you can get so so so manic. And you need that time to kind of gather your thoughts, take your mind away from your art, your work. There's a word called cathartis when you express ...when you let off some type of emotion through something. I treat exercise and eating well, for that. So that was kind of my thing, so diet and exercises is the string to my balloon, to my free balloon, within this whole artistic practice.

Academic Support 9:50

Because studying can be really stressful right?

Vincent 9:53

Very, I've had some stressful moments in this course. And whenever I go to play football or do some type of exercise, I always leave it somewhat, and it's helped me a lot. UAL provides all sorts of... they have an active week, I believe, where they let people try different types of sport, or there's like discounted societies and all sorts of stuff to join in. So that's the biggest thing I would say, just to kind of find that before you start. So you have the routine going through the whole course. Yeah.

Academic Support 10:24

So that's a good thing is just some tips for people before they come. You've already given one, are there other others?

Vincent 10:30

I know that we've, you know, been in schools, and we've always worked in classes, I know that people know about working in groups. But I guess we have creativity, that's even more important. And, I think ... I kind of touched on this before. But just to say, again, like our creative output, depends on collaboration somewhat, and UAL, you know, celebrate it a lot to work in group projects. And I think those helped me a lot. And then how to work with different types of cultures, and the diversity of thought, race, sexual orientation, all of it, I think it all kind of melts us into this magical team of pure creativity to push the boundaries. Everybody probably realised I love saying push the boundaries, but that's actually what I believe in. And so I'm a big believer in diversity of thought coming together and to get really cool ideas.

Academic Support 11:25

What are the qualities required for collaboration?

Vincent 11:28

And for me? Well... okay, well, firstly, you might be putting a random team. So you have to be able to deal with different personalities that you might be able to get along with just like in the working world. And so I guess, in that predicament, I think everyone should be able to listen, show empathy towards sometimes thoughts or someones concerns around a project, and patience as well. I think my biggest thing is like being positive to welcome people's ideas and push, and push and push and push, without being judged. Because this, there's a lot of studies saying that, and if someone kind of believes you're incompetent, or you can't work, or you can't create any ideas it kind of inhibit someone's creativity. And I thought that's so powerful that that was the thing. So I would just kind of push for people to be positive, and always welcome someones idea and never say, oh, that can't work, or what you thinking about like... oh, yeah, we could do that. And then ask why and keep pushing and pushing. So that goes back to the basic thought of there's no such thing as a dumb question.

Academic Support 12:39

And what about the practical issues? Somebody absent somebody's not doing what they say they're going to?

Vincent 12:46

Yeah, that's a tricky one. And I think, another reason, ...unless you have to ask around the class and ask if anyone has a personal relationship with them to find out

if they're okay. But I never treat it as something personal. It's more like, are they okay? Because that's the basics of human life is to make sure everyone's all right, you know, because they might not be okay. Some people wouldn't say nothing, some people will deal with it, and internalise it themselves. So, if that isn't a thing and are just being lazy, then I don't know what to really say, just be like, 'mate, we've got to do this project. And this mark is representing not only you but us, but after a while, if they're not changing, and there's not much you can do just have to do the most from your part. Yeah, so I've been in sticky situations there, but I never take it too personal.

Academic Support 13:33

And the benefits so outweigh them?

Vincent 13:36

Definitely. The first project should be my biggest highlight for my course, around service innovation. And we designed this cool service, they were like lockers by tube stations for people to put their luggage in, or there was like luggage rental. But it was like a really cool service we designed, not an actual product. That was great. Coming off of that everyone was super positive. Everyone was like asking why not, and getting to know each other, very sociable. And you can see from that, it reflected an idea. And we presented it. And I remember doing some drama as well. So I was kind of using the drama of it, in the presentation as well. I have a lot of friends that work in industry. And they find it challenging that some students don't know how to kind of leverage or commercialise their craft somehow. And I'm not saying that every type of art needs to be commercialised. No, I'm saying that if you want to make a living from it, and you able to survive, you need to know how to make money from that. But it's cool. I enjoy it. I really, I really enjoyed it. Yeah.

Academic Support 14:33

Can we talk about some marketing and assessments and being assessed?

Vincent 14:38

Well, the good thing about UAL is that when they give you crits, right, they give you an opinion of what they think about your project. But I welcome them a lot. I think it's very important to get feedback on your project. But sometimes you can get an opinion from someone that isn't formed on the subject. And that's probably the problem because when you take your work to everyone, like I can take my work to someone that works in... I don't know... no offence to anyone who works in tax, no offence... but they might be more astute to how to work with tax and not service design. And, but then again, the services then might be for them. So I guess let me use another example of like fine art, fine art is an expression. So, a critique from the tax man compared to critique by someone who is grounded on 20 years of fine art practice is completely different. Because they can critique your strokes and types of colours and stuff. So, I think that taking any type of feedback is good, but taking it from someone that is in your craft is even more important. But yeah, I've learned to welcome in the last year, learn to welcome feedback and critiques and never take it personal. And the feedback you get, the marking you get... and always asked why, how can I improve? So with me, I was asking a lot about how I can improve my writing again, and again, and again and again. So that's the.. that's the biggest thing for me just how to improve. This is a journey. And you're never going to be the best, the best of the super best, hundred percent is impossible. But you will improve.

Academic Support 16:23

And for you are grades really important?

Vincent 16:27

Yes, I did a project called uncertainty project, which is all about failure. And you're basically like, meant to fail. Because you were pushing the project so much that it had to fail, if that makes any sense. So we worked on a project around the future of sustainable travel experiences, yes. And pushed our idea. It was so hard to fully impliment, but they love the fact that we pushed it so much. So marking, in that sense, isn't important, but you know, everyone wants to do well, you want to be able to talk to future employers, or have something to show people. But I think certain art, you know, it doesn't really matter. Because again, it's an expression. But being able to express that or write about it in the most pertinent way is where you, I guess, you get marked on. So working on that is very important. For me.

Vincent 17:23

I guess, again, in the collaboration part, don't be afraid to talk to someone that looks like a completely different background from you. I guess it's hard, because everyone seems ... everyone seems really like in their project. You really don't want to disturb them, but at times, I think that whenever whenever I've done that, they've been really interested in what I have to say, because it's not really done a lot. People don't really disturb, or people don't really talk to each other, in that kind of way sometimes unless they're on you course or you know them from somewhere. But I would say like for the last month just like say for... for three times I'm going to talk to someone I've never spoken to or wouldn't speak to in my life and say, hey, I don't know, cool shoes, and then from there you talk. And then you never know what happens from there. That's one thing I will say. Having that aura of community and collaboration and hey, what are you working and that's so cool... yeah.

Academic Support 18:17

Sometimes foreign students, international students for whom English isn't their first language, feel that they are very embarrassed. What do you say about that, what would you say to somebody who said my English isn't good enough .. I couldn't just go up to someone and...?

Vincent 18:31

I was born in London, I only speak one language. I can speak a dialect, my parents are from Ghana, so I could speak Fante a bit. But I've always been like, so upset that I can never speak my language properly. So I look at them like wow, you guys are so amazing, you could talk more in two languages or three languages, I can only talk in one. So like I'm humbled, such as... I don't know, but anyone, yeah, I think they should kind of have this pride... they should have the pride that whatever country they're coming from and can talk English, like that's so amazing. Yeah.

Academic Support 19:04

So sort of final conclusion would be you're leaving conclusions?

Vincent 19:10

Umm... uncertainty and failure is an opportunity. So welcome any type of experimentation, welcome it all. It's definitely going to push your creativity and your craft somewhat. And your creative output depends on your collaboration. So working with different people from different cultures, races, just push yourself to talk to someone you completely would not usually do. And, you know, I'm sure it will inform your work in some way. The last one, what I already said around like diet and exercise, I really do believe that can help with some type of relaxation or focus. It's scientifically proven a lot of times it can produce endorphins and what not. So diet and exercise, treat it like your string to your balloon, or your anchor. Look at expanding out of your practice and trying new things. Like I'm sure it will help you some way. And as I said ... I'm not even an artist. I'm actually somewhat a marketeer by practice but I've ended up like a... director and actor and designer from coming to UAL, so I'm really grateful for that. That's been... that's probably been the biggest thing for me to understand that I shouldn't box myself in. Of course, have a focus but don't be not willing to label yourself, not willing to try new things. That's the biggest thing that I've learned.

Academic Support 20:42  
I wish you every success.

Vincent 20:44  
Thank you so much, Victoria.

Academic Support 20:45  
And thank you so much for coming in to talk.

Vincent 20:48  
It was really good talking about this, I was just kind of thinking about the past two years or a year and nine months while talking and just kind of grateful that I came to UAL. So I'm leaving with a smile my face, even though I have essays to right, yeah.

Academic Support 21:10  
Thank you.

Vincent 21:11  
Thank you.