

WE ASKED UNIVERSITY STUDENTS WHAT THEY WISH THEY'D KNOWN BEFORE STARTING UNIVERSITY...

This resource details Brighton University students' perspectives of the creative industries, namely their thoughts on the industries before they began their course.

Powered by Coastal Catalyst



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



There is no single, fixed career path

Students repeatedly emphasised that they wished they'd known earlier that:

- Careers (especially creative ones) are non-linear
- Changing direction is normal and often valuable
- Skills accumulate over time and transfer between roles and sectors

Many described thinking they had to “pick the right job” or “stick to one ladder”, only realising later that flexibility is a strength, not a failure.

You don't need to know everything at the start

A strong theme was reassurance:

- “It's okay not to know exactly what you're doing or where you're going”
- Confidence grows through doing, not before starting
- Feeling unsure does not mean you don't belong

Several students said they nearly ruled themselves out of courses because they didn't feel “ready” or “good enough”.

Studio culture, friendships and relationships really matter

Students wished they'd understood sooner that:

- Learning happens socially, not just through assignments
- Peer relationships, collaboration and studio culture are central to success
- Asking questions and talking things through is part of the work

Support networks were often described as just as important as technical ability.

Start using tools and software early and often

A very practical insight:

- Learning software (e.g. Adobe, Rhino, SketchUp) earlier would have saved time and stress
- Using tools during projects is more effective than waiting until you "feel ready"
- Learning continues throughout the course - you're not expected to master everything at once

Students wished they'd been less intimidated and more experimental from day one.

Time management and self-direction matter more than expected

Students noted that university requires:

- Planning your own time
- Deciding how much effort to put where
- Taking responsibility for pacing work

Several said they underestimated this shift from school and wished they'd prepared for it mentally.

Presenting work and getting feedback is a skill you build

Many reflected that they initially found this uncomfortable, but:

- Presenting early helps build confidence
- Feedback improves work and thinking

Everyone finds it hard at first - it gets easier with practice.

This was framed as something they wished they'd known was normal, not a personal weakness.

You don't need to be "good at everything" (including Maths)

This came up strongly:

- Creative courses value diverse strengths
- You don't need to fit a single academic stereotype
- Different backgrounds and life experiences add value

Students wanted younger versions of themselves to know that diversity is an asset, not a barrier.

Small habits make a big difference

Practical tips students wished they'd started earlier:

- Carry a sketchbook and draw regularly
- Observe and document the world around you
- Look at other people's work for inspiration

These habits were seen as confidence-building rather than about "talent"

Confidence grows by doing – not waiting

Repeated advice to their younger selves included:

- Trust yourself
- Don't be afraid to ask for help
- Try things before deciding you can't do them

Several students said they had written themselves off too early.

Creative careers can be broader than expected

Students noted surprise at:

- How many sectors design connects to
- Opportunities to work internationally
- The range of job titles and roles available.

They wished they'd known earlier how wide the field really is.

Powered By

COASTAL CATALYST



@FutureCreatorsUK | @TalentAccelerator_