

# TWISTS AND TURNS IN MY DAUGHTER'S APPLICATION

My daughter was always going to enter the world of design. Always creating things out of the pile of recycling boxes and plastic tubs from a young age – but she always drew a plan of what she was going to make first.

As she came towards the end of Year 12, we were aware that we needed to start doing some planning on what she planned to do as she finished her A levels. Some of her friends were starting to go off to Open Days around the country appearing to know exactly what they wanted to do and where they wanted to do it. We should all bear in mind though that this is the exciting planning stage and it all seems much more fun than thinking about the exams and assessments coming up in the following year – for the student and the parent!

Every so often, I would speak to her about her options and try and work out whether she knew what she wanted to do. Her college were asking her to start working on her personal statement and so unsurprisingly she decided that she wasn't going to apply for University in September. She certainly wasn't going to rush into a decision that might be a wrong decision. Knowing that she wanted to eventually do something creative later, she might do an Arts foundation course in our local town and bide her time.

Each of my children have had a totally different journey and yours will too. I just let her take a lead for herself but made sure that I kept the dialogue going about University and possible opportunities ahead. We looked at Open Days and possible courses for the following year. She kept hold of the prospectuses that she had picked up at her local UCAS fair and I would sometimes find her looking through them or looking at a course online.

London College of Fashion Open Day – November! Just saying that sounded very exciting to me and so I was thrilled when she said there was a course there that she wanted to find out more about. As soon as I could, I was googling and getting all the information we needed to book train tickets (I splashed out on a Two Travel Together railcard to give me discounted fares. I was anticipating more of these girlie trips with my daughter)...but she still said she wasn't going to go to University straight after A levels. She just wanted to research the courses.

We live in a fairly rural part of England and so London holds great promise. Don't all the best Art and Design courses take place in London – hip, trendy, happening? The reality was not quite as convincing and the time spent travelling on the tube from different buildings that she would study in, let alone the accommodation. The student ambassadors were all super cool, dressed in black and looking like nothing would either excite or upset them. The studio where she would work was closed for the day so we couldn't see any of the equipment. I stayed very positive but I could tell from her face that this wasn't what she had expected! On the train home, she said very simply "Mum, I don't want to study in London".

With that box ticked, she decided that she needed something to compare it with and so two weeks later, we spent eight hours on several trains going to Nottingham. We arrived early in the evening at the beautiful old train station and walked from there along streets with bars and shops full of fairy lights, great food aromas and laughter. The following day, we were greeted at the Open Day by enthusiastic and friendly ambassadors who looked really happy to be welcoming us in their bright T-shirts. We walked around the beautiful Waverley art building and at all the equipment in the workroom. The staff talked us through everything with smiles on their faces.

It was no surprise to me when she whispered to me “Mum, this is my course and I can’t wait to start – I’m going to apply this year!”

So a week before the college deadline, she let her tutors at college know that she was going to apply after all and had to do her application quickly, write a personal statement and get her portfolio of work ready for a January interview. She was determined to only apply for this one course – if she didn’t get in, she would reapply the following year and do an Art Foundation to make sure she did get in. Compared with how she had been a few months/weeks before, something had changed. She had found a course that she was really excited about doing in a place that she was really excited about living in. Once they have that, they are half way there!

She is now at the end of her second year at Nottingham Trent and still loves it. I am glad that we did the trip to London as it showed her what she didn’t want from a course – it just shows that we do need to encourage them to see a few universities in different places so that they can work out what they do and don’t want for themselves.