

Creative industries

Roles within the creative industries are extremely varied and encompass many sub-sections. During this briefing we will focus on the most popular amongst our students; the Fashion Industry, Games Industry, Media and Journalism, Performing Arts and TV and Film.

Fashion – Roles within the fashion industry are extremely varied and it is important to remember that there is more to a career in the industry than fashion itself. Roles within the industry include everything from buying, merchandising, sourcing, finance, design and garment technology, retail management, photography, event planning and lots more.

Gaming – The aim of this industry is to develop, publish, and distribute video games and interactive experiences across all digital platforms. Roles can be found within, but not limited to, animation, audio, game design, production, programming, and quality control.

Media and Journalism – Journalists, broadcasters and directors form the public face of the sector, but there are many other roles. Researcher roles are popular entry points for Oxford graduates: these can involve fact checking content and finding people to appear in programmes. The impact of digital media is redefining both journalism and broadcast content, and having an awareness of multimedia platforms and tools is now crucial for graduates seeking to enter this sector.

Performing Arts – Roles within performing arts can be either performance (musician, actor, dancer etc.) or non-performance (set designer, sound technician, talent agent etc.) based. Whichever route you decide, you can be sure to use your creativity and technical ability. Most performance roles will be on a freelance or fixed term basis.

TV and Film – The number of different types of jobs is immense, spanning all parts of the production process from commissioning, development, production, post-production and through to distribution. Like the performing arts industry, roles within TV and Film are increasingly becoming “freelance” or fixed term contract opportunities.

Remember, creativity can take many forms, so you might also like to see information on working in Advertising or Culture and Heritage – or any of the many other sectors which employs creatives!

Further study

Further study may be needed for certain careers within the industry that require technical ability before you can undertake a particular role. Depending on the course, completing further study might present you with the opportunity to complete work experience as part of your studies, for example, the NCTJ for journalism, or the NFTS for people with some film and television experience. In addition, completing a final performance as part of further study within performing arts will expose you to leading talent agents within the industry, though this itself is not a guarantee that you will secure an agent. It is important to do research and weigh the costs and benefits for individual situations: some people recommend them as a way to gain contacts and experience, but others do not consider them as necessary.

Getting in and entry points

Competition for positions can be high, so relevant experience is vital. Most people need to start in an entry level position, often as an intern or a ‘runner’, for example. To gain this initial experience, think about advertised internships and short-term seasonal jobs which can provide you with great experience. In addition, both paid and unpaid roles such as work staffing festivals and events; front-of-house or promotional work; game testing, support for tours; and summer work with children and young people can provide great experience.

Furthermore, it is important to establish and cultivate professional contacts because those interested in this sector will often need to find (or create) their own openings by contacting individuals and organisations directly. See our advice on networking and speculative approaches, and take steps to develop and cultivate your contacts – some great opportunities can arise this way.

For industry specific insights and roles see:

- Gaming, TV and Film – www.screenskills.com.
- Media and Journalism – www.journoresources.org.uk and www.theunitlist.com.
- Fashion – fashionunited.uk/career-centre.
- Performing Arts – See www.thestage.co.uk. For performance-based roles, you can attend open auditions that do not require an agent. Details can be found on the Stage. Should you wish to work as a professional actor, you will need an equity card (www.equity.org.uk).

For a regularly updated list of jobs and internships within the creative industries see creativeopportunities.arts.ac.uk.

Extra-curricular ideas

Plan ahead to get an edge on the competition after graduation by accumulating experience whilst at Oxford.

- Join a relevant society, such as the Fashion Society, Film Making Foundation, OUDS or TAFF (for theatre designers and technicians).
- Write a blog and/or produce video or comment pieces for other websites/products on topics of interest. Document your work on your own webpage.
- Take every opportunity to contribute to all things creative at university: student newspapers, Oxide Radio, perform in showcases, open mic nights and productions.
- For graduate careers in both journalism and fashion, candidates will need to build a portfolio of samples of your published writing/work, and a good record of relevant work experience.
- Shoot your own documentary, short-film (on your smart phone), direct, produce, act, etc in a stage play.
- Design aspects of a game (demonstrating your ability in the area of gaming you wish to go into).

Next steps

www.careers.ox.ac.uk/acting

www.careers.ox.ac.uk/communications

www.careers.ox.ac.uk/culture-heritage

www.careers.ox.ac.uk/games

www.careers.ox.ac.uk/journalism

www.careers.ox.ac.uk/music-and-radio

www.careers.ox.ac.uk/tv-film

Alumni profile

Andy Laithwaite

What: I have fingers in many pies. First and foremost, I'm an actor. Alongside that, I run my own business, The Actor Inside, which provides workshops and training to help people feel more confident presenting themselves on camera. I'm also a writer, and I'm working on funding a London production of my new feature-length play. As well as this, I've performed as a singer-songwriter at the Edinburgh Fringe festival.

Two years after finishing my degree at Oxford, I trained at London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA). Since then, I've been represented by a creative talent agency, The Production Exchange.

Why: I loved acting in plays while at Oxford, and before university too, and had considered applying to acting schools instead, but I'm glad I ended up where I did. In any case, I decided while at Oxford that I wanted to become a professional actor and, after approaching some agents while still at university, thought that acting school would be the best door into the industry. Who knows if it was, but it was definitely a life changing experience.

Advice: One of the tricky things after leaving acting school was coming to terms with the open-endedness of it all. At first, the realisation that I didn't have some recipe for success to follow was terrifying, but it has all become a lot more fun since then. It has required me to develop my own self-management to a level unthinkable for me while studying. I don't mean that in the sense of self-discipline, but actually in the sense of letting myself be led more by joy and genuine interest, rather than simply cracking the whip to get on with whatever seems like I 'should' be doing. I think creativity flourishes when you can give yourself a lot of love (that's my cliché allowance).

I'm also hugely indebted to an incredibly supportive network of collaborators and friends, for whom I am very grateful. I first met some of them through acting here.



Position

Actor Ordinaire.

Background

BA History and Politics,
University College, 2014.

Alumni profile

Paoula Sobanda

What: I create game stories that resonate with players' emotions, aspirations and dreams. As a narrative designer, I lead the full cycle of the story's development. I craft the storylines that drive the player experience, create the characters for players to adore or hate (or both), design the aesthetic direction, and direct the art development and worldbuilding. I write all the game dialogues and texts, from the romantic leads to the most minor Non-Player-Characters.

Why: Personal fit is crucial when choosing a career. Studying hundreds of years of the world's best literature at Oxford gave me the skills I needed to take the pen into my own hand and write impactful narratives for our players.

I also wanted a job that would make a positive impact. For me, games are more than just play. At their best, when crafted with real skill, creativity and care, games meet our deepest needs and fulfil our fantasies.

Top tips: In gaming you have to be bold and clear with your ideas. Take any idea, and think, how can we make this bigger and better? How do we make this level even more exciting, this world design even more spectacular? How can we get players to resonate deeply with this character? If you think something is exciting, it's likely others will react in the same way. The parts that feel too daring often turn out to be what players love the most.

I previously worked in management consultancy, so I came to gaming with the mindset of a cultural analyst as well as a writer. This means that whether I'm designing a historical fantasy role play game or a home renovation game, I connect it with the zeitgeist and player's motivations.

Game development is hugely collaborative, and having great working relationships with people across departments, from art to software to the producer, is crucial. Luckily, everyone is genuinely interested in creating the best experience for our players.

I'm always happy to meet others who are interested in the industry, so find me on LinkedIn if you'd like to connect.

**Position**

Narrative Designer, IGG Mobile Games.

Background

MSt English (650–1550), St Hugh's College, 2016.

Alumni profile

Safa Dar

What: I'm a Script Editor at the BBC, giving editorial input on dramas and comedies, including notes on scripts; having creative conversations with producers and creatives; and – of course – a whole lot of reading.

How: After graduating, I researched various careers and came across Creative Access, an organisation that aims to increase underrepresented talent in the creative sectors. After applying for various roles, I secured an Office Runner job at a production company, where I helped with development and production tasks and got to ask the development team about what their jobs involved. Then the pandemic arrived. I used this time to email production companies asking if they needed freelance script readers, or if they might be free for a 15 minute call. I signed up to be a reader for several script competitions. This built up my editorial experience (all paid of course). While I was doing this, and applying for full-time jobs, the Executive I'd done work experience with saw my current role advertised and forwarded me the listing, and here we are!

Tips: Be curious and proactive – do your research, be curious about people and their jobs, don't be afraid to reach out to those whose work you enjoy. I felt awkward asking people who didn't know me for their time, but there are many people who are very happy to share their experience with newer talent, and keen to pay it forward because they know how inaccessible the industry can be. As long as you approach them considerately, rather than in a demanding way, there will be many people willing to talk to you. And, as my career journey hopefully illustrates, you never know where your next opportunity could come from.

My final (and underrated!) tip would be: start following creatives and companies you admire – Twitter can be a great place to hear about opportunities! I would recommend following 'The TV Collective' to learn about opportunities, particularly for underrepresented talent. Facebook groups such as 'People in TV: Runners' are also great.

**Position**

Script Editor, BBC.

Background

BA History, Mansfield College, 2018.