

# Arts and Creative Industries

# Uniquely



## Max Farra from UniSmart spoke to Jenny Owen about what makes LSBU unique.

Dr Jenny Owen, Director of Education at London South Bank University's School of Arts and Creative Industries



**Max** - It's tough to compete on location with London South Bank University's School of Arts and Creative Industries. Nestled in central London, with theatre land and Soho at its doorstep, this is one of the most media-friendly universities for arts in the capital. Although Arts and Creative Industries students come from a more traditional university background, there is no such thing as a typical LSBU student.

Distinguishing themselves from other universities in London, LSBU Arts and Creative Industries offer courses with a professional focus and strong vocational character, many of which are industry accredited.

LSBU distinguishes itself from its post-1992 colleagues by being strong on employability and entrepreneurship. For this, they were named University of the Year for graduate employment two years running (2018 and 2019).

UniSmart caught up with Jenny Owen, Director of Education and Student Experience for the School of Arts and Creative Industries. Her role covers quality assurance, course validation, development of new curricula, and everything to do with student experience. At LSBU, student induction is devolved to each individual school and Jenny makes UniSmart an integral part of her student welcome. Over the years, we've both evolved in the way we do things...



“We value UniSmart as a crucial part of our retention strategy.”

- Dr Jenny Owen

**UniSmart - Prior to UniSmart, what did the induction programme consist of?**

**LSBU** - It was dull but worthy. We used to have sessions where members of the Student Life Centre would overload the students with information about everything and anything. It would go on for what felt like days. At the end of it, the students looked uninspired and not at all energised like we wanted them to be. Now we know that no one can take in that amount of information, particularly when they're full of anxiety and everything's new.

**UniSmart - What was lacking?**

**LSBU** - We struggled to get the students to retain the information we bombarded them with. The previous approach didn't dovetail with the way we want to teach them. We don't lecture them like that, so why would we do that in induction?

**UniSmart - Why did you choose to work with UniSmart?**

**LSBU** - A colleague of mine at another university told me about this amazing induction they had there. I remember thinking how good it sounded. Later,

## How to improve your induction:

- Have the confidence to let go of the old way of doing things.
- Think about what you want your induction to achieve.
- Dovetail your induction with your teaching style.
- Try to deliver some information in context.
- Contact UniSmart - we can help.

we had a new Director of Student Services come along and she'd heard of UniSmart. I put two and two together and realised that UniSmart were the people who deliver that high-impact, energising induction.

**UniSmart - What was the hardest part about letting go of the 'dull but worthy' programme?**

**LSBU** - It was about having the confidence to let go of the old mode of doing things. Telling students all about health and safety and everything else in their first week is just not the best time. Of course, students need to know about health and safety, particularly our students who are working with equipment, studios and rigging etc. That's covered as part of their induction into the studio and we deliver that information in context.

It's also about what you want your induction to achieve. If it's about making your students feel like they belong and getting excited about their course, UniSmart helps to achieve that. It's an energised event. The students really get into it and come out of the presentations on a high.

**UniSmart - Would you recommend UniSmart to someone in your position at another university?**

**LSBU** - I would definitely recommend UniSmart to anyone in my position. It's a really high impact and engaging way of addressing key concerns that most students have when they first arrive at university. For our students, the pitch is completely right, and we value UniSmart as a crucial part of our retention strategy.