

1st generation UCA graduates celebrated

15 April 2024



Two graduates from the University for the Creative Arts (UCA) in Epsom, Surrey have been named in Universities UK's 100 Faces campaign, celebrating the stories and achievements of first-generation students.

McKenna Marsden and **Troy Hunter** feature in the campaign's arts and sports talents category alongside Happy Valley star, Amit Shah, the crime writer Sir Ian James Rankin OBE, and BBC Sports Personality of the Year 2022, Beth Mead. All 100 graduates listed by Universities UK were the first in their families to attend university.

"Going to university gave me a lot more independence and taught me new skills, developing my abilities in a subject which was once just a passion," said McKenna, who is a BA (Hons) Fashion graduate. He was chosen by British Vogue as one of its top 50 emerging designers, showcased his graduate collection at London Fashion Week, and interned at Christopher Kane.

He said: "University gave me stability while allowing me to break into the fashion industry, leading to many big achievements. I don't think I would have had the success I did without studying at university."

Originally from Newcastle, McKenna's working-class background was the main inspiration for his final graduate fashion collection and continues to influence his designs.

"Anything is possible if you believe it and work hard for it no matter how many setbacks you may have, if you believe you can achieve your goals you can," McKenna added.

Troy, who graduated from UCA in 2013 with a degree in BA (Hons) Film Production, has gone on to write episodes for the hit Netflix show Sex Education and an episode of Eastenders. He was also nominated for Outstanding Breakthrough Creative (Television) at the NAACP Awards.

Troy said: "Studying film production at UCA made a huge difference in my life, it gave me the confidence and determination to continue pursuing a career in the TV and Film industry when people around me were telling me otherwise."

His success continues in the form of a short film called Mya and his debut play Black Pride, as well as a television adaptation of the same name, with Maia Pictures.

New research commissioned by Universities UK revealed the transformative impact of going to university, with almost three-quarters of first-in-the-family students agreeing their degree gave them the confidence to apply for jobs without feeling like an imposter.

Vivienne Stern MBE, Chief Executive of Universities UK, said: "There are those who say that too many people go to university. I disagree. These stories tell you why. In this country, you are still twice as likely to go to university if you are from the wealthiest background, compared to the least wealthy. That's not right."