

Tom Holmes NSS 2012 NUS Promotional Poster Competition Winner



Winner's Story

Sitting at my computer, I received a link from a friend about a competition that the **National Union of Students** was running to design a poster for the awareness of the **National Student Survey (NSS)**, and, being a graphic design enthusiast, I made no hesitation to take part. I didn't really know much about the NSS, only that it was a survey for 'final year undergraduates', but I saw this as an opportunity to learn more about it, especially as I would soon be completing the final year of university myself.

As a student studying film production technology at **Staffordshire University**, I have become increasingly eager to branch out into graphic design and motion graphics. This in mind, I made the decision to take a year out from university this year to expand my portfolio. So when I discovered the competition, I couldn't think of anything more impressive to feature on my CV than having a design involved in a national campaign, which is targeted at over 400,000 students at over 250 institutions in the UK.

My main motivation was not only my passion for graphic design but also the exciting opportunity for the winner to experience working with design firm **Hat Trick** and **Ipsos MORI**, the research company that runs the NSS. I was also very attracted to the recognition the winning designer would receive as part of the competition prize. Having always been quite private with my art and design work, the prospect of having it shown in institutions across the country, although a little unnerving, was extremely new and exciting for me.

The prize in sight, I set about working on a design, one that would strike a chord with students and portray the message of the survey.

Have you ever found yourself sitting in a lecture or a meeting, absent-mindedly doodling on the nearest piece of paper? Well I have, and it was exactly this concept that I wanted to portray in my design, as I knew it would relate to students just like me. I also wanted to pull in the theories of automatic drawing and how subconscious doodling can represent ideas and thought processes. By using the tagline '**Have Your Say**', I re-enforced the idea of getting these thoughts out of the head and down on paper, which after all, is what the NSS is all about.

On being told of my success in the competition I was thrilled. It gave me such a confidence boost to know that something I had created caught the eye of someone and had sparked interest. I was left excited for what was coming next!

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Spending two days with **Ipsos MORI** was an invaluable experience. Not only was I able to see behind the scenes of how a campaign of this size operates, but I also learnt a lot about the way in which a design is developed and adapted to be fully suitable for a campaign such as this. I was also able to see how my own design had been developed into a final poster ready for the campaign launch. All this is knowledge I shall take away and use for future creations.

I am very grateful for the amount of input **Ipsos MORI** allowed me to have when it came to the adaptation of the design into other mediums such as web banners, coasters and a promotional video. I knew that, because of my strong interest, I wanted to be as involved as possible and they have given me the opportunity to be really engaged with the whole campaign.

As well as the obvious learning experience, I was fortunate enough to be working with some really professional, appreciative and just plain nice people. If all offices are like this one, I am not daunted by the prospect of working in one!

My next move is to visit London design firm **Hat Trick** in the New Year. I'm extremely excited about this, as it will be a further boost to my CV and will provide me with fantastic industrial experience.

Winning this competition has given me the confidence to want to enter more competitions like it, and I shall be doing so whilst working on my portfolio for the next year to ensure that I am more employable when I graduate.

My advice to future competition entrants is this.....think about **the message** and **the audience** and above all **keep it simple**. As Leonardo da Vinci once said, 'simplicity is the ultimate form of sophistication'. Simple designs, which are **bold**, and give out the **required information**, are the ones that demand the most attention. Perhaps an equally important point is to always have fun! After all, if you don't have enthusiasm for what you are doing then what's the point, right?