

Alumnus James Lambert
Subject Economics
Graduated 2003 (BSc), 2004 (MSc),
Place of Work Ashurst
Position Economist

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Ashurst is a leading international law firm working with clients on complex legal and regulatory issues relating to cross-border transactions. With a team of over 200 partners in 12 countries, it provides advice to organisations around the world.

James has worked at Ashurst as an Economist for three years, advising on a wide range of competition issues.

Great minds *go on to* great places

Were you considering any other universities before joining Royal Holloway?

My school spoke highly of Royal Holloway. I studied the Royal Holloway prospectus and was very taken by the traditional campus, location and by the fact that the economics department was relatively new and growing.

I looked at a number of other London universities (UCL and LSE) and other leading economics departments, including Warwick. Royal Holloway won because I already knew the lecturers, valued the University of London degree and wanted to take advantage of the range of scholarships and teaching assistant opportunities available.

Why did you choose the course you studied?

I had enjoyed studying economics at school. I enjoyed the fact that, despite being a rigorous academic subject, it could be readily applied to a wide range of topical issues and debates in the news: from interest rates and unemployment to competition policy and international development.

Did you find your studies difficult?

Having studied economics and maths at 'A' level, I found the first year quite straightforward. As the course progressed, the maths element became more advanced and required me to work harder. When I moved to my MSc, there was a big jump in the amount of work and the difficulty which required me to put in lots of hours of study!

What did you think of Royal Holloway as a university?

It was a very friendly university where students of all backgrounds and departments mixed easily. Whilst the College had grown significantly, it was still sufficiently small to create an atmosphere in which one felt that one knew a good proportion of both staff and students. This is a big differentiating factor from other universities. In addition to life on campus, there were a few local pubs we enjoyed visiting, plus the varied London activities were only around 40 minutes away.

Were you involved in any sports or societies?

I was a member of the University of London Air Squadron which offered many and varied activities including flying training with the RAF at weekends, plus great social opportunities with people from other University of London Colleges. I also sang in the Chapel Choir at Royal Holloway. The Chapel and musical activities really distinguished RHUL from other universities, as we were one of the very few universities outside of the Oxbridge Colleges to have an active Chapel. I also joined the Staff-Student Liaison Committee, which enabled me to put across the views of my fellow students to the department.

What is the most important thing that Royal Holloway taught you?

The economics courses at Royal Holloway were very applied to the 'real world' as well as being

academically rigorous. This has been a major benefit. Even to this day, I still use many of the econometric techniques (ie statistical analysis applied to economic questions) in my everyday work and refer back to my old notes from my course!

What is your fondest memory of Royal Holloway?

There were so many during my four years. What stood out for me was developing so many friendships with other students, particularly those who lived in the same halls of residence.

What did you learn at Royal Holloway that helped you develop your career?

Royal Holloway gave me the technical economic skills I needed for my job and a very good knowledge of how to apply analysis to real-world economic issues. I also benefited from access to lots of non-academic activities which helped me develop leadership and teamwork skills. Mixing with a wide range of international students was also useful preparation for working in the City.

What has been your career path since graduating?

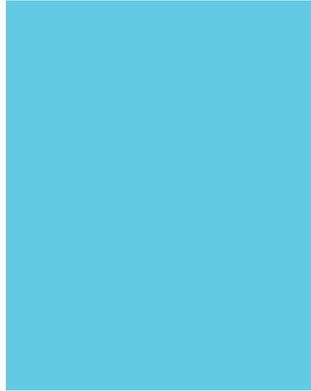
I joined the economics division of the Civil Service Fast Stream. This led to a job as an economist at the Office of Fair Trading where I worked in the mergers branch, assessing whether mergers between companies would lead to a substantial lessening of competition. It was incredible to be influencing such decisions just



Royal Holloway
University of London

people with passion

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weeks out of university, but my industrial economics module in my MSc had provided a good grounding and enabled me to participate fully. After a couple of years at the OFT, I joined the Competition Commission, which assesses the mergers which have been identified by the OFT as potentially raising competition concerns as well as examining markets which may not be working well for consumers. After a year at the CC, I joined Ashurst.

What do you do in your everyday job?

Ashurst has a leading competition department and is unique in having a team of in-house economists which primarily focuses on the economic analysis of competition cases (including mergers, market studies and alleged breaches of competition law), before agencies such as the OFT, Competition Commission and European Commission. As well as making submissions to competition authorities on cases, I provide risk assessments to clients on potential transactions.

We also produce weekly economic updates both internally and externally on key macroeconomic developments. We regularly work with our colleagues in our other offices, particularly those in Brussels, Paris and Stockholm.

What challenges have you come across in your role?

I have had to keep up with developments in

competition economics and law and to be prepared to assess novel cases using existing economic theory. I've also learnt to develop client relationships. Working at a City law firm has also required me to manage my time effectively.

What are your aspirations?

I am keen to continue to develop my career in economics and to reach partner or director level in due course.

Why did you choose to work for Ashurst?

Ashurst has a good reputation in the marketplace both in terms of the quality of its work and its friendliness and I had come across their work whilst at the OFT and Competition Commission. Ashurst is also unique in employing a large team of economists in-house which gives access to a greater range of cases than might be available working as an external economic consultant.

Have you been back to the College since graduating?

After graduating I visited quite regularly to keep up with friends who were still studying or living in the area. I still visit occasionally for alumni events, including some of those aimed at members of the Chapel Choir. The College has undertaken substantial investment even since 2004, with brand new halls of residence and lecture theatres. As a member of the Alumni Advisory Group, I visit the College at least twice a year for meetings.

I also attend the Alumni in the City evenings twice a year, which are a great way of meeting old friends and making new contacts. Holding such events in the City was something I suggested to the College, who were extremely responsive, organising the first event and now making it a regular fixture.

What advice would you give students to help them with their career eg top career tips?

In today's competitive environment, it is important to work as hard as possible to get a good degree. Students should carefully consider which modules they wish to study as they may require different skills and even lead to a different focus for any further study. It's also important to join any clubs or societies or to undertake some part-time work. These activities are really helpful when you need to provide graduate employers with examples of leadership, teamwork and using initiative.

I took part in lots of activities at Royal Holloway and would recommend taking part in as much as can be fitted around academic study whilst the opportunity is there. When I moved to London and started work, I really missed having ready access to scores of clubs and societies just around the corner from my room!

Many successful lawyers and partners in the firm come from a non-legal academic background and join the firm as trainee solicitors after having completed a law conversion course. It's possible to obtain funding towards conversion courses from the leading City law firms, including Ashurst.

For more Alumni Profiles visit: www.rhul.ac.uk/alumni/profiles/

