



**Alumnus** Stuart Walker  
**Subject** Geography  
**Graduated** 1992  
**Place of Work** Ashurst  
**Position** Head of Human Resources

ashurst

Ashurst is a leading international law firm working with clients on the 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.

Stuart has worked at Ashurst for 15 years, heading up the award winning Human Resources department.

# Great minds go on to great places

## Were you considering any other universities before joining Royal Holloway?

I considered universities in the south of England, outside London which included Southampton, Exeter and Bristol. There were many things that set Royal Holloway apart from the other universities from the feel, size and reputation through to the people. Royal Holloway is genuinely a home away from home College which is a unique selling point.

## Was your priority the university or the subject of study?

At the time it was the subject but on reflection I suspect my head said subject and my heart said location and feel. After all, if one is out of balance with the other (or in geographers' terms, lacking equilibrium) then the course, and such an important life event, becomes a great deal harder and less enjoyable.

## What did you think of your Royal Holloway experience?

If I had my time again, I'd be back in the Founder's building like a shot. People I have met, who attended Royal Holloway at various times, have nothing but terrific memories. My social life was

brilliant and I made lots of friends with like-minded people from diverse backgrounds. Also, my lecturers and staff were fantastically supportive.

The location of Royal Holloway campus speaks for itself. If you don't like greenery then it may not be the university for you, but in my mind the nearby Virginia Water and Windsor Great Park are untouchable.

## Were you involved in any sports or societies?

I was chair and secretary of both the hockey and tennis societies. Also, I occasionally played volleyball for the College. Hockey was my main pastime and luckily this sport was, and still is, massively popular on campus.

## What is your fondest memory of Royal Holloway?

Where to start! I recall many fond memories from getting full colours from Will Carling and Brian Moore; seeing some of the most amazing bands in the Union through to having Founder's as the backdrop to our hockey pitch.

A key memory was getting my Royal Holloway offer and knowing I would be able to walk down the driveway to Founder's and call it home - I knew everything else would slot into place. My Royal Holloway acceptance offer, simply put, was the key moment for me.

## What does your role as Head of Human Resources involve?

My primary responsibilities are to be one of the lead advisers to the senior and managing partners of the firm, carve the HR agenda and ensure that our people are operating at the best of their ability and doing what clients, the firm and they themselves want to do, and doing it well.

## What exciting projects have you been working on?

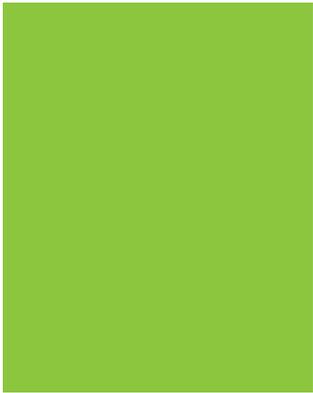
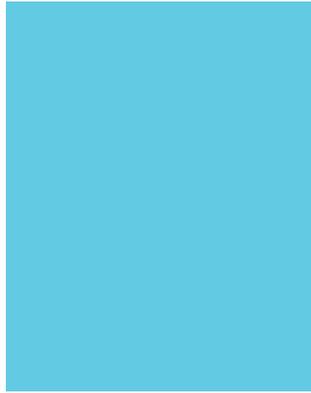
We recently won the *Financial Times* HR Innovation award for bucking the trend in how we structure our career progression and billing structure to clients. Some have followed us along this road and much talk is in the market. However we are taking this forward with client engagement programmes centred around how we can offer value and support.



Royal Holloway  
University of London

# people *with* passion

“Adapting to meeting the fluctuations a large organisation and its staff face is the biggest challenge, albeit it a positive one.”



### What challenges have you come across in your role?

Adapting to and meeting the fluctuations a large organisation and its staff face is the biggest challenge, albeit it a positive one. The world doesn't stop turning and you have to be ready to challenge the norm and drive through change, and with the support of the Board, be prepared to ride the ups and downs.

### Why did you choose to work for Ashurst?

Fundamentally the same reason for joining Royal Holloway - the feel and the people. You can make things work when you like the people and the organisation.

Ashurst is a great place to work. There are also lots of staff benefits including an onsite doctor, dentist and physio and we have a huge range of sports clubs from skiing to cricket. It's a very sociable environment.

### Have you been back to the College since graduating?

I have been back on a number of occasions. For the two years after graduation I continued to play for the Firsts Hockey team at weekends, trying to pretend I could keep up with their post-match celebrations. I have also attended and presented at a number of Royal Holloway career events - both general and those held in The Queen's Building,

and hopefully will be able to continue to do so in the future. It is clear that the College continues to evolve but doesn't everything. Key however is that the heart of what I knew as Royal Holloway remains in place and as such sets the bar other colleges should look to reach.

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

Decide what you like, what you want to do and go to the end of the world to try to achieve it. Don't try too hard to stand too far out, but rather be yourself. Don't rely on sending 100 CVs and standard letters; you need to make things happen.



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