



Great minds *go on to* great places



Alumnus Arsim Shillova
Subject MBA International Management
Graduated 2007
Place of Work Astrium
Position International Business Consultant

Having completed his Bachelor degree in Kosovo, Arsim pursued his passion for international business through management consultancy roles before undertaking his MBA at Royal Holloway.

His current role involves bidding for major land management contracts and leading projects that enable developing countries to put key infrastructure in place for long term economic security.

Why did you choose to study at Royal Holloway?

Initially, Founder's Building drew me in. The campus was so clean and green: every time I set foot in the grounds it just felt magical. Secondly, I knew that I wanted to do a worthwhile degree from a reputable university, so the College's affiliation with the University of London was a positive.

What did you enjoy most about your MBA?

All of the professors had excellent academic experience, but also used countless case studies in class time: it's one thing to read about a subject, but quite another when people give you a case study to analyse based on real world experience. The MBA cohort was truly multicultural, with over 20 nationalities in a class of 70. Everyone saw the issues from different perspectives, because we all came from different backgrounds and had diverse experiences.

What was your overall Royal Holloway experience like?

Certainly one to remember for the rest of my life. The College, School and administrative staff were all very friendly, welcoming and supportive. I had a place to go and discuss any issues, to work around problems instead of against them. I successfully

applied through the Management Science Institute for the John Lloyd Huck programme, and was able to contribute to research in international student recruitment strategies for the College. It was something to be proud of, and a privilege to be a part of such important discussions.

What did you learn from your MBA?

Anyone who does an MBA has to answer the questions: where do you want to go and how do you want to get there? Before my MBA I was already doing some international work with an Italian company, developing business in the UK; that was the trigger for me pursuing international business on a larger scale. One of the most important skills the course taught me was time management: there are essays to write, course material to study, and additional projects! By interacting with people from different backgrounds, you come to learn and see things from a different point of view. You make friends, and leave having built up a good contact base.

Have your studies helped you in your career?

The only way to succeed in international business is to have good contacts, to be able to remember people and make people remember you. I am

currently managing a bid with teams from the UK, France and Saudi Arabia, and managing the relationships can be challenging! You have to keep on top of the workload, make sure people understand what they are supposed to do, and produce quality work within time limits. It's quite a challenge, but certainly achievable, and I learnt that through my MBA. It goes without saying that studies will only help you if you put your theoretical knowledge to practical use: it's not what you learn but what you do with it.

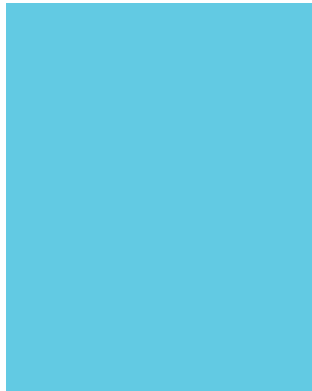
What is your role at Astrium?

I develop international business by managing bids or identifying opportunities that the company could bid for in the future. Generally, Astrium's work comes from the government, so we bid for large contracts that help governments develop, either in the UK or abroad. In the international business division, the team members are responsible for different regions, so we must keep a look out for Prior Information Notices, which alert us to projects that a government is putting up for bidding. I manage the bid from day one until submission, and if we are successful I also get involved in other parts of the project. Being a geo-information company, I work on bids for projects to do with land management, mapping or surveying.



people with passion

“I come back in order to give something back.”



These are extremely important aspects for developing countries in particular: proper land infrastructure that facilitates land ownership enables the banking system to be fluid, because land can be used as collateral against loans. It's fascinating work with really tangible benefits.

What do you enjoy about business consultancy?

I have built up a huge database of contacts through meeting people, and get to travel internationally through work. Also, I enjoy the opportunity to help people solve problems. As a consultant you approach problems from an outside perspective – providing practical solutions from an external position.

What do you do in a typical day, and what are the best parts?

Typically, I am either managing an ongoing bid, or searching for early intelligence or Prior Information Notices on potential tender opportunities in Europe or elsewhere. Then I keep track of these opportunities, as they usually become Tender Notices inviting companies to bid. If we decide to move forward with the project then we start the process of identifying partners and preparing a bid proposal. The best parts of the day are the meetings, the opportunities to problem solve as part of a team, or work on a bid.

What is your top tip for undergraduates looking to pursue further education?

If you have an undergraduate degree people have respect for you, but it is different if you have a Masters qualification, especially with regards to the MBA. If you have the passion to succeed and the drive to go further, then go for postgraduate study. You'll learn more and you'll come out with a different way of thinking. You'll be more independent in your work because you have to find your own path and that's a valuable experience. People around you will recognise that you are working hard and they will support you as well.

What connection have you had with Royal Holloway since graduating?

I have always kept in touch with the College. I am lucky enough to have been invited back to talk to students about my experiences, and present a session about professional networking. Make sure that you build up your contact base whilst you are studying; go to the talks, shake hands, get the business cards and then follow this up with an email of thanks. You never shake hands with someone, then go home and forget about it.

I have always wanted to contribute in any way possible, but something has to encourage you to do it, and the eagerness of the students to listen and learn makes the experience a rewarding one for me. I still get emails from students whom I met through the talks, and I help where I can with CVs as well as practical tips for overcoming shyness. I come back in order to give something back.



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