



**Alumnus Subject** Simon Owen  
**Graduated** Information Security  
1997  
**Place of Work** Deloitte  
**Position** UK Lead Partner, Information & Technology Risk



Deloitte is the largest professional services organisation in the world with approximately 170,000 staff in 140 countries, delivering audit, tax, consulting, enterprise risk, and financial advisory services through its member firms.

Simon's role at Deloitte is to help large organisations understand and appreciate the inherent risk of operating with technology, advising them how to manage this risk through the deployment of controls including security.

# Great minds *go on to* great places

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

No, I only considered Royal Holloway because it was the leading place to study information security and had an excellent reputation both within academia and industry.

## Why did you choose the course you studied?

I was a Head of Security for a UK Bank and wanted an academic foundation to my technical role at the bank.

## Did you find your studies difficult?

Some of the courses were technically challenging, especially advanced cryptography. I specifically recall lectures on elliptic curve crypto, which to this day I don't think I've got my head around!

## What memories do you have of your time at Royal Holloway?

Probably the chalk board sessions with Professor Fred Piper and trying to keep up with him. As he gradually filled the board, the writing would get smaller and smaller – testing my eyesight and my attention to detail!

## What was life at Royal Holloway like for you?

The surrounding area is beautiful and the stunning Founder's building takes your breath away. I went to the Students' Union a couple of times and it

seemed fairly vibrant, but I was a part-time mature student so I wasn't as caught up in student life as I might have been if this had been my first degree. Royal Holloway was easy to get to as it was on a train-line from London, and easy to drive to which made travelling from work to my lectures a breeze. I also represented the University at football a couple of times.

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

My studies provided me with an academic foundation and an increased level of technical competence which greatly helped with my security role at a UK bank. The course also provided me with access to mature students practicing in the same field, so it was easy to create a network. Some of my study group have gone on to take very important roles within Security and Risk.

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

Put simply, network. I always think it is a great shame when students graduate having spent several years studying with colleagues and these close ties almost sever overnight. I still keep in touch with the people I studied with at Royal Holloway over ten years ago. In addition, the challenge of any degree, particularly a Masters, is

to make it real and relevant to business, taking all that academic knowledge and applying that in the real world.

## What has been your career path since graduating?

Having left the bank with my Royal Holloway MSc, I joined Arthur Anderson to start a security practice which grew and expanded into an IT Risk team within Anderson which is now part of Deloitte. The Information and Technology Risk team I lead across the UK now has over 500 people.

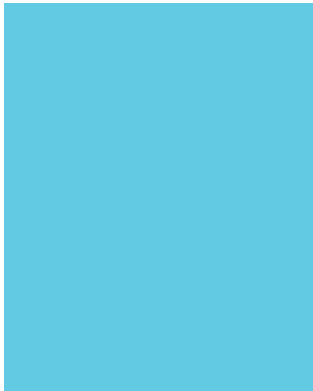
## What does your current role entail?

I help large organisations understand and appreciate the inherent risk of operating with technology and advise these clients how to manage this risk through the deployment of controls including security. I also have a global role within Deloitte, leading our security services.

## What exciting projects have you been working on?

I have been working on large security transformation programmes for investment and retail banks, sensitive security projects for the UK government and helping the oil and gas 'super majors' refresh their legacy technology within the oil fields.





# people with passion

“Make sure you make the most of your opportunities, have some fun as well as staying on top of your studies and network with your peers”

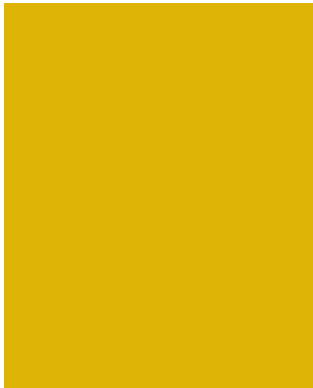


### What challenges have you come across in your role?

How to strike the right balance between understanding the theory and science of security and applying it to the everyday world and getting the balance right between risk and reward to secure an organisation's systems. The old adage that if you want a secure system, unplug it, clearly doesn't work for businesses and you've got to get the balance right.

### Have you had any international experience?

My family would say I've had too much international experience! The nature of our organisation and the clients I serve, being global in their operations, does mean extensive travel at times. But rather than moan about 'airport, taxi, hotel and then home' I prefer to adopt a more positive approach and try to devote a little time to sightseeing when visiting somewhere a little different to London. I have operational responsibility for teams in the UK, Switzerland and the Commonwealth of Independent States (Russia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine amongst others) and have visited most major business cities globally.



### What are your aspirations?

Staying relevant and making sure that my Deloitte team remains number one in its field with regards to technology risk, whilst continuing to help my clients manage risk as a trusted advisor.

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

Having worked in the private sector (banking, oil and gas) for eight years, I wanted to see what it was like on the other side of the fence as a consultant. I had worked alongside consultants in the past and it seemed to be a vibrant industry with the opportunity to work on a variety of different projects. I needed a change that would push me out of my comfort zone.

### What benefits do you get at Deloitte?

I get to work alongside some of the smartest people in the industry in some of the largest and most innovative organisations. Throw in some travel and a little fun and in my mind you have the best combination. Having been here for over ten years, I am still challenged and enthused about Deloitte.

### Does Deloitte have any sport facilities?

We have a Deloitte gym, which I use during the week for indoor rowing. Otherwise, I play a bit of sport at the weekend (strictly 'old boys' teams these days!). There are a number of Deloitte sport

clubs that our people can join but I have more than enough to keep me busy. With two young boys who love any type of sport, at the weekend I am a full-time taxi driver and touchline coach.

### Have you been back for alumni events?

Yes, I attend the Information Security Group alumni dinners when I am in the country and I was recently asked to deliver a lecture at Royal Holloway on some of the challenges facing the security industry, including a need to become more relevant to business.

### What advice would you give students?

Having worked so hard to get a place at University, don't just go through the motions entirely focused on getting a First or 2.1 degree. Make sure you make the most of your opportunities, have some fun as well as staying on top of your studies and network with your peers. Your time at University will go by far too quickly and you wouldn't want to be in a position where, looking back over three years at Royal Holloway, you think 'if only I had made more of my time here'.

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