

James Schirn, MSc Corporate Governance and Corporate Responsibility | Royal Society of Chemistry, UK

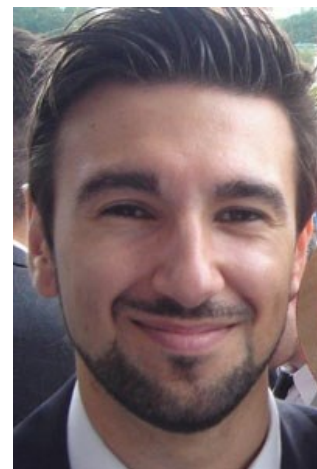
“I would definitely attribute the Birmingham Masters to getting to where I am today, accelerating my career prospects in a relatively short period of time.”

James Schirn graduated with an MSc in Corporate Governance and Corporate Responsibility from the University of Birmingham in 2009. He is currently employed as Head of Governance and Legal at the Royal Society of Chemistry.

My career

Once I had completed my MSc, I managed to get an internship at Teleperformance, a global outsourcing provider. After 3 months this led to full time employment as their in-house Legal Adviser. Here I learnt a lot about the world of work, how to deal with politics, managing teams and workloads while learning about the whole range of industries from retail to banking, electronics to I.T. However, after 2 years of great development I realised I needed to move to London to expand my skills set and to further my understanding of governance within a large corporate. I got a job in Canary Wharf as a Company Secretary for Metlife – one of the largest pension providers in the world. Here I honed my administration of Boards both in the UK and around the world.

To really accelerate my career I realised I needed to move into management. This led me to the Royal Society of Chemistry where I am today and which I really enjoy. Every day is different, the culture and people are great to work with, and it's a young and vibrant place to be with a start-up atmosphere where everyone wants to contribute. I would definitely attribute the Birmingham Masters to getting to where I am today, accelerating my career prospects in a relatively short period of time.



Why Birmingham Business School?

It was 2008 and the banks were collapsing, the financial crisis was in full swing. I was just finishing my Law degree and noticed the word “corporate governance” kept being used in the media and thought it could be an opportunity to explore as part of my career. I looked into the role of the Company Secretary as well and saw the University of Birmingham provided the MSc in Corporate Governance and a joint qualification from ICSA (the professional body for chartered secretaries). Noting the reputation of the University I felt this would help improve my career prospects and give added value to my C.V which other candidates I would be up against would not have.

Making the most of the support available

The Masters has been the best decision of my career as I would not be in my current role without it. A University of Birmingham Masters gives you the edge over other candidates and propels your career forward. This coupled with the great alumni network and careers centre ensures your connections continue to grow outside of university.

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Challenges

I found many aspects challenging as compared to a degree you have to do a lot of self-taught work. However, I really enjoyed the group discussions that break down a topic and make difficult subjects easier to manage. I found the quantitative modules such as corporate finance very tough but the passion the lecturers had for their subjects enlightened me further and enabled me to understand some of the more difficult aspects of the course.

Tips and advice

I would recommend anyone to do a Masters as it allows you to critically evaluate subjects in a way that you don't do at degree level. You grow as a person due to the connections you make and the level and quality of the teaching available develops and prepares you for the world of work.

Find out more

MSc Corporate Governance and Corporate Responsibility is no longer available, however you can study these elements within the MSc Management and MSc Marketing degrees.

View all [Masters courses \(/schools/business/courses/masters/index.aspx\)](#) at Birmingham Business School.