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Jim Biggin

Graduate Procurement Officer

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**Royal
Geographical
Society**

with IBG

Advancing geography
and geographical learning



Job title: Graduate Procurement Officer
Organisation: London Universities Purchasing Consortium
Location: London, UK

How did you get to where you are now?

Before my current job I had part time work in pubs, cafes and manual work throughout my time at university. Then I had a summer internship at Ernst and Young in the International Tax Consulting branch, specifically working with telecommunications, media and technology companies like Vodafone and Activision. Then tried my hand at being an entrepreneur with Queen Mary's InQUBEate scheme.

I successfully campaigned to affiliate Queen Mary and 80 other Higher Education institutions to Electronics Watch (an NGO combatting human rights abuses in public IT supply chains) by persuading my current employer to affiliate those 81 on their behalf. I liked the feeling of making an impact on the world by making public purchasing more sustainable, and kept attending a couple of meetings my current employer runs on responsible procurement. When they said they were opening a

position for a graduate to join the team I applied straight away and got the position I am in now.

Was there anything particularly useful that helped you get into this role?

As my job is quite niche I think doing that successful campaign with Electronics Watch set me above the rest because I had in-depth knowledge of my current employer through that work and therefore understood what they were looking for. The success gave me a lot of confidence too, as I think it's great to apply what you've learned in geography. Sometimes I found myself thinking what's the point of studying if you're not doing anything with it, and so that campaign justified everything.

What do you do as part of your role?

I create documentation (called Framework Agreements) which my organisation provides for Universities, Galleries and Museums to purchase goods and services. I amend contracts, conducting research for and create specifications, formulate pricing mechanisms and then manage contracts and relationships with suppliers to ensure all those documents are being followed properly. I also go around the country to meet suppliers, or go to conferences on the latest do's and don'ts in purchasing.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

I get a great opportunity to look into nearly every industry in the UK. I have met dozens of people working at universities and suppliers in subjects like insurance, laboratory equipment, debt recovery, waste collection and software, so every day is different and I get to learn so much.

Plus, because it's a small team of 11, I get given a lot of responsibility, which was daunting at first but now since I feel I've got the hang of my job and feel more confident to put my stamp on things. For instance, right now I'm researching

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ways to make sure the taxi suppliers we work with have a fleet of cars that meet the new London Ultra-Low Emission Zone guidelines.

What advice would you give to someone wanting to go in to this career?

Do try to get some extra-curricular experience on something related to the job environment you want to move in to. If you want to be a teacher, get some experience teaching or mentoring, if you want to work in an office, get some experience in an office. The subject matter doesn't need to be exactly the same. For example if you want to be a Quantity Surveyor, marketing experience is fine. You are not expected to be an expert in your first job, but you are expected to have the basic competencies of project management, team work and motivation which you can get from any professional experience, and then apply those basics to the field you want.

One of a series of profiles of staff and students from Queen Mary University of London.

