



## The varied paths of women's career journeys

**Name:** Katie Warrener

**Current role at UCL:** Senior Data Compliance Officer, Access and Widening Participation



**Please could you describe your career journey:**

- Self-employed genealogist – family trees and probate genealogy ('heir hunting').
- Local DVLA office, transferring personalised number plates.
- University of Brighton – working as a combination of receptionist/front of house and finance officer for the Theatre; and additional PA work for the Faculty of Arts' Reader.
- University of Brighton – graduations admin on the student side which included invitations, ticketing, uploading passlists to SITS, statistics, reports, data retention and finances.
- University of Brighton – Events team: organising inaugural lectures and institutional events as required, including one-off lectures, VIP events, building opening ceremonies, the 'performance' side of graduations – logistics, finance and, when GDPR came in, data protection.
- Open days manager (secondment): organising open days – speakers, staffing, parking, catering, finances and reports.
- University of Brighton – Data Protection office: Freedom of Information Act requests, data retention, staff training.
- UCL – Senior Data Compliance Officer: data protection and finance work for the Access and Widening Participation team.

**As you moved through your career journey, please describe your experience(s) in how you progressed to your current role?**

I started working as a self-employed genealogist as a summer job while studying at the London College of Fashion – I turned out to be better at admin than practical, so ended up taking the job full-time when I left. Realising that there was no prospect for promotion, and getting bored of commuting, I moved to a local DVLA office, but there was a recruitment freeze, and I couldn't be made permanent, so...

I moved to the University of Brighton where I worked as a combination of receptionist/ front of house and finance officer for the Theatre, as well as (because I'm easily bored) additional PA work for the Faculty of Arts' Reader. Working with the theatre got me interested in event organisation so I moved to...

The graduations team, working in student admin where I started to learn about data protection as we also managed the student awards archive. This then led to...

The Events team, where there were a lot more VIP events. During this time, I also did a secondment managing open days for a short stint. Having taken on the GDPR side of things, I got to grips with the legislation early on, so this led to...

A role in the Data Protection office where I found myself strangely missing the finance and SITS work that I'd used in my previous roles. Then I spied a job at UCL that combined data protection work with finance work for the Access and Widening Participation team, so here I am!

### **What lessons have you learnt on your career journey?**

Much more fun can be had through the random route than by following what you perceive as a straightforward career path. Along the way I've met fascinating people, done amazing things and had the opportunity to have a lot of fun. There have been times when applications and interviews didn't go anywhere and I thought I'd be stuck doing the same thing forever, but then I've found that something better – and more suitable to me personally – was waiting around the corner. It sounds a bit fatalistic but then when pushing to achieve something that hasn't worked, all you can do is wait to see what comes up for you.

### **What working achievement or initiative are you most proud of?**

Being given an award is a fantastic reflection that you've been recognised for your work on a professional basis (and I'm extremely grateful for having received a Cyber Security and Data Protection Award last year!), but oddly enough, it's the number of personal 'thank yous' I've received for the small things that took a minute to arrange but that made a big difference to the people concerned.

### **What advice would you offer to others?**

Go with the flow. Don't kick yourself when the job applications aren't taking you where you think you want to go, and try not to get too frustrated. Take advantage of offers to try different areas of work when they crop up and see where they lead.