

Meet a... Education for Sustainable Development Coordinator



Valeria Vargas, Education for Sustainable Development

Coordinator at Manchester Metropolitan University

How would you describe your job in a tweet i.e.140 characters?

I provide support, co-ordinate and act as a point of reference to academics across the University for initiatives on ESD.

What does an average day look like?

Each day is different in this role. I attend meetings with a wide range of stakeholders. For instance, I attend the Environment Management Group meetings. I also work with academics in a wide range of projects and I have a different role in each. This ranges from leading the project to providing light-touch support.

What are the key skills and qualifications required for your job?

This role requires a degree. The skills in the job description of this role that I think are key for this role include the following*:

- Knowledge of current Education for Sustainable Development issues and an understanding of curriculum design and assessment within the Higher Education Sector.
- Ability to liaise effectively across a number of different service areas and to develop and maintain a wide range of working relationships.
- An excellent standard of written and spoken communications – writing reports, delivering briefings and presentations, liaising confidently with a range of academic and senior colleagues.

What training and continuous professional development do you require?

It is useful to attend conferences, keep up to date with reports and the work of others in similar positions on ESD across the UK and internationally. Research training is also required as I am involved in research projects.

What are your top three responsibilities?

- Lead 'Learning for a Sustainable Future' policy area of the University's Environmental Management System (EMS).
- Provide support to academics and share local, national and international good practice and guidance.
- Start, organise and influence the development of multidisciplinary projects on ESD.



To help our Members understand more about the roles in further and higher education institutions, we've created a suite of career profiles. These share the main responsibilities and skills and knowledge required of many of the key roles that play a part in embedding sustainability in a tertiary education institution.

View the entire suite at www.eauc.org.uk/meet_a_member

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Tell us something surprising about your job that people may not know about?

As this is an emerging role, it has a lot of potential for development.

What are the positives and negatives of the job?

I think this job has many positive aspects. It is a very varied and flexible role with plenty of opportunities to be involved in exciting and creative projects. The negative is that there is little budget centrally for ESD activities and until recently the role was not permanent.

Do you manage a budget, and what are your key priorities for this?

I do not manage a budget. However, sometimes I have had managed funding budget with colleagues e.g. award cash prizes. As this is a very small budget, it is very important to prioritise in order to support projects that might provide greater benefit to MMU's commitment of embedding ESD into the curriculum.

What does the path to career progression in this role look like?

This is an emerging role in higher education so the path to career progression is undefined. However, it has the potential to progress to an academic role (teaching and/or research) related to ESD.

What is the minimum and maximum salary band for this role?

Grade 6 (£24,775 – £27,864).

What advice do you have for graduates and other potential candidates who are considering joining?

Contact and try to have a chat with a person in this area.

For institutions without an Education for Sustainable Development Coordinator – what 3 aspects of your role do you think are the most important for any institution's sustainability journey?

- ESD is an EMS area which is often overlooked, despite the fact that HE, FE core "business" is teaching and learning and research.
- ESD has the potential to address hard sustainability aspects that might be difficult to address in engagement programmes and through staff training.
- Sustainability and more specifically sustainable development requires a multidisciplinary approach because its aim is to address wicked problems.

What department do you and your line manager sit in? Which departmental interactions are vital for your role?

My role is a partnership between the Environment Team in estates, the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) in Student and Academic Services (SAS) and the Faculty of Science and Engineering.

I have two managers. The Environment and Energy Manager in the Environment Team and the Principal Lecturer for Student Experience in CELT. It is vital for this role to interact directly with all the faculties, the Environment Team, CELT, and less directly with other SAS departments (i.e. Centre for Academic Standards Quality Enhancement).

What opportunities and challenges does working in a higher education institution bring?

The main challenge and opportunity for my area in higher education is academic freedom. On the one hand, it brings interesting debates on values in an academic setting and whether ESD should be embedded into the curriculum. On the other hand, academics are able to shape the curriculum introducing, surfacing and addressing ESD issues. This would be different if working in an NGO for instance, where advocacy might be an essential part of the role.

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How do you communicate the outputs of your role to the wider institution, and what does this include?

There are several channels to communicate progress of ESD activity. This includes reports through the governance structure.

The Annual Environmental Sustainability Statement, which reports on the progress towards achieving the aims and objectives set out in the Environmental Sustainability Strategy. This includes the area 'Learning for a Sustainable Future' concerned with the ESD activities across the institution. ESD progress is also communicated through CELT's newsletter and website, and ManMet Life, which is the institution's newsletter.

What are the unique opportunities to embed sustainability in to this job?

Through this role, there are opportunities to embed sustainability into the curriculum, research, community engagement whilst potentially supporting other areas such as waste management or energy.

How has EAUC Membership helped you in your job and within your institution?

The Green Gown Awards are a good way to get recognition for outstanding work in sustainability and they seem to have a good profile in higher education.

The EAUC conference is a great networking opportunity to keep up to date with the sector although it would be great if it could have a more balanced programme between estate related issues and formal and informal curriculum issues.

How can other Members contact you?

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- Twitter: www.twitter.com/MMU_CeLT www.twitter.com/MMUEnvironment
- LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/pub/valeria-vargas/9b/156/b22

*These have been quoted directly from the job description publicly available at:
www.jobs.mmu.ac.uk/mmujobsite/vacancydetail.aspx?vacancyuid=00000008240

