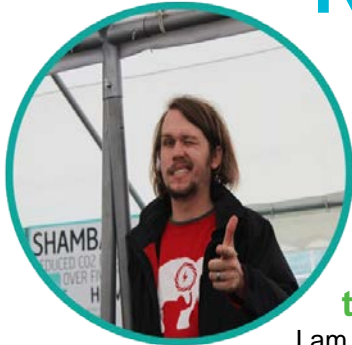


## Meet a... Festivals Researcher



**Richard Fletcher, Festivals  
Researcher at De Montfort  
University**

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

I am a Research Assistant working in Public Engagement, for an environmentally-themed project that travels and exhibits at music festivals, "Face Your Elephant".

### What does an average day look like?

In the 'off season' I am in regular contact with festival organisers, our project partners and our volunteer team. We are always developing the exhibit and looking out for interesting and engaging ideas. During the festival season, I am doing everything necessary to get the show on the road; booking travel, signing off on contracts, packing up vans, building tents, organising speakers and various other activities.

### What are the key skills and qualifications required for your job? *What legal knowledge do you need that's mandatory? If none, what is useful to keep up to date on?*

The key legal issue is simply health and safety, for our team and the general public. Although we mainly work with adults, it has been worthwhile to check our responsibilities for safeguarding and DBS checks. Without these two I would not be able to do my job, but environmental regulations are really where our work is focused, whether these are mandated by government or whether these are related to industry-led schemes.

### What training and continuous professional development do you require?

Anything public engagement related really, from making videos, holding constructive web-conferences, graphic design; my background is in the arts so I am used to producing and getting on with creative projects.

### What are your top three responsibilities?

- It's the least glamorous, but generally looking after the volunteers, staff, general public and our exhibit. It's certainly not the most dangerous job in the world but it can be exhausting and we really need to keep everyone enthusiastic and happy for the exhibit to work. Whether this is related to travel, food or getting expenses forms paid on time, I try to look after the team without being too overbearing.
- Continually trying to develop the core appeal and effectiveness of the exhibit. What can we do that transfers science and engineering knowledge in a relevant and enjoyable way? How can we work with festival organisers to reduce their environmental impacts?
- Maintaining good contacts and relationships with our partners, without whom we wouldn't have many festivals to go to, or many exhibit materials to display! It is a small sector and if people have positive things to say about you, it can go a long way.



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](http://www.eauc.org.uk/meet_a_member)

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

I think the cliché of “stage managing” events or exhibits is that you are the person running about like a headless chicken trying to do a million things at once. I think a good manager in this context should have done all the running around and panicking in the week or two before; the event itself is pretty relaxing and rewarding if you’ve prepared well. Probably why people think it is easier than it is!

### **What are the positives and negatives of the job?**

It is hard to balance the content, what should be the “fun” and “serious” parts of the exhibit. Without the former, less people will engage, and without the latter, the quality of engagement suffers. The workload naturally varies greatly around events so be prepared to work extra when the time comes round; also don’t just forget about it all and lose momentum when it’s the ‘off season’.

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

Yes, mainly keeping track of expenses but also scoping ideas and pricing up various options based on ideas. A while ago I worked in a printers so I know how to approach last-minute and seemingly impossible orders; I know when ‘we can’t do it’ really means ‘we can’t do it!’.

### **What does the path to career progression in this role look like? *What are the opportunities? What’s this limited by?***

Public engagement seems to have expanded quite a bit as a topic of discussion but I’m not certain this has necessarily led to increased resources being available. The pressure is always to get as much bang for your buck as possible, which is frustrating when it’s (arguably) not a particularly well-funded area to begin with.

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

It is a Research Assistant post, £25,000-£31,000 per annum. However it is only part time (0.3) due to the seasonal nature of the job.

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

With regards to events specifically, the barrier to entry is pretty low, so if you’ve arranged fundraisers or society events while studying, you at least have an idea of the basics. However, for anything larger it can be tempting to be overly ambitious at the planning stage, then be disappointed you haven’t met your own targets. It’s far better to be consistent in the long run.

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

Faculty of Technology in the Institute for Energy and Sustainable Development. We have a lot of access to researchers in various sustainability areas, though the university generally manages its own sustainability via the Estates department so we try to engage here where relevant.

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

There are a number of sustainability-themed exhibits doing the rounds at festivals and I think ours may be one of very few university-supported ones. Others tend to be environmental charities who have a clearer objective at the events; generally campaigning and fundraising. Our project tries to do quite a lot under one banner, so there are a number of outputs that need delivering and evaluating.

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

As a public engagement project, we are lucky to have this as a central objective, but nevertheless it can be a lot of work to ensure the message is tailored to each group of stakeholders. Our internal press department are pretty

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supportive. Finally, with all of the above it can be hard to tell what the return on investment is, unless you get an obvious lead or contact out of it.

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

Principally community and industry engagement, I don't think sustainability can only be addressed 'on paper', you have to get out there and shout about it a bit too!

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

The online resources (and directory) are useful, a number of my colleagues have won a Green Gown award which is increasingly well-known across the sector.

### How can other Members contact you?

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