

Meet a... Sustainability Officer



Elena Rivilla Lutterkort,
Sustainability Officer at the
London School of
Economics and Political
Science

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

Spreadsheet guru; keeping all things waste management, sustainable procurement and ISO 50001 under control.

What does an average day look like?

My day starts with a quick walk around the campus to check everything is in order and the waste has been collected. I often arrive to find odd items on my desk that other staff hope I may be able to re-home. Then it's emails, phone calls to fix many problems, a chat with the FM team and after that who knows? From meetings with contractors to invoices to audits in boiler rooms to data modelling. The odd 6am start with contractors or late evenings with students.

What are the key skills and qualifications required for your job? *What legal knowledge do you need that's mandatory?*

For my role, in depth knowledge of waste legislation and waste management practices is essential. A bit of health and safety knowledge and Highways related regulations is a plus, but what you really need to know is how to get value for money through contract management. I also have an MSc in Environmental Technology (though the right experience would get you this role).

What training and continuous professional development do you require?

Keeping up to date with changes in waste management techniques and legal changes. Internal auditor training, but also a good understanding of how ISOs work, and interpreting the wording in the standards. The ability to pick up new information fast and sound like an expert a few days later.

What are your top three responsibilities?

- Waste management
- Sustainable procurement
- Energy Management Systems

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

I often get called to pack/sort out abandoned rooms, and they always look like gremlins live there.

What are the positives and negatives of the job?

The best bit about my job is that I get out of the office and meet many people; this is possibly also the worst bit as sometimes you wish for just a whole hour without interruptions at your desk.



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

Yes I do manage a budget. I have targets to reduce the amount spent each year while upping the service delivered, where possible finding value in waste, and supporting engagement activities.

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

Career progression is a tricky one, as the route to managing a sustainability team seems to be through the energy/carbon route and not so much the waste route. However, the role is very transferable to the corporate sector especially if you focus on soft skills (budgets, project management, etc.).

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

The pay varies in different organisations, but from £25K upwards.

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

Diversify for the first years of your career, get your hands dirty (I worked on a recycling truck for 3 months once) and there is no such thing as too much knowledge.

For institutions without a Sustainability Officer – what 3 aspects of your role do you think are the most important for any institution's sustainability journey?

Waste and procurement are common areas of environmental impact in all organisations, getting it right helps everything else run smoothly and tends to reduce costs. My role often is about making sure the right people are in the same room to resolve a problem and bring some creativity to the solutions.

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

I sit in the Sustainability Team in the Estates Division. From here I interact mostly with other Estates teams. But also colleagues in Purchasing Services, and Conferences and Events, Catering...

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

One of the best things about the HE sector is this inbuilt sense that we have a duty to be a role model, teaching by example what a sustainable lifestyle should be like. Although money is still the bottom line, it's not yet as harsh as in the corporate world and there is a little more freedom to get challenging projects started.

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

The first port of call is the [Sustainable LSE website](#) and our annual sustainability report, but we also run events (e.g. displaying a whole day's waste in the centre of campus), campaigns and competitions, deliver training, and we're active on social media.

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

In my particular role, I interact with many staff during my day to day where I am able to encourage sustainable practices; in particular, the LSE has just decanted some buildings and this has meant quite a lot interaction with the departments moving out, with opportunities to confiscate extra heating/cooling standalone devices, among others.

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

I think a strong point for membership is the availability to share information and access the support of a motivated network. Even when an issue doesn't apply to me I'm still learning.

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EAUC sustainability CPD programme

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How can other Members contact you?

- Email: rivillal@lse.ac.uk
- Website: [Sustainable LSE website](#)
- Twitter: www.twitter.com/SustainableLSE

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