

University of the Arts London – London College of Fashion Sustainability Professional Award Dr Rosemary Willatt

About the project

Summary

Rosemary was appointed as LCF's first Sustainability Coordinator in May 2014 and since then has gone far beyond her core role around operational sustainability, quickly developing relationships with staff and students leading to positive engagement opportunities.

This includes a number of collaborative projects such as developing the first staff volunteering policy, working with local organisations and students on creative upcycling of waste materials and developing networks of sustainability expertise through publicising and celebrating staff members' initiatives.

Project partners

Rosemary works closely with colleagues from across the college and the wider university - the central Sustainability team, facilities managers, operational staff, and academic staff including the Centre for Sustainable Fashion – as well as engaging with the colleges' 5500 students.

The results

The problem

LCF has been a long-time proponent of the importance of embedding sustainability into the curriculum and research, however there was a lack of resource in place to deliver operational improvements to match up to their educational achievements. It was recognised that a college specific post would help to bridge the gap between academia and operations and ensure that LCF was walking the talk.

The approach

Rosemary has been instrumental in leading on a number of projects; two of the most impressive being:

- Introduction of a college-wide Staff Volunteering programme. Working with colleagues in the Social Responsibility team, Rosemary introduced LCF's first volunteering policy giving staff the opportunity to take time out of their role to devote to activities with a social or environmental benefit.

ual: university
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Profile

- LCF is one of 6 colleges which comprise UAL
- LCF has over 500 staff & 5,500 students
- UAL has over 2,000 staff and 19,000 students
- LCF is located over 6 urban London sites.

Category supported by



Finalist's case study

- Coordinating the LCF element of the UAL 'Waste Off' challenge. The challenge tasks students with using waste materials to design and make new creations. Rosemary worked with a local hospice to come up with a specific brief around functional difficulties with dressing, organized workshops and enlisted the help of technical staff.

Our goals

The University Strategy states that one of UAL's four core values is "We uphold the values of social justice and environmental stewardship through our teaching and research, as well as in the way we live, work and conduct our operations."

Specific objectives for the two projects mentioned here were:

- Staff Volunteering: To inspire staff to volunteer their time to help create a unique campus which benefits the health and wellbeing of all students and staff, has a positive impact on our local and global environment, strengthens our community and provides inspiring spaces for us to work, learn and rest.
- Waste Off: To transform waste materials into purposeful inventions. To explore the creative potential of the discarded. To show by example what is possible and through this activity help establish practical processes for staff and students to share resources and avoid contributing to landfill.

Obstacles and solutions

Lack of financial resource	Although the Sustainability Coordinator post has no budget attached, Rosemary has found ways to make projects happen by bidding for various funding streams; including making the case to the University Sustainability Team (for example to cover the costs of WARP-IT registration, which has gone on to save LCF around £7000), and winning a UAL competition for 20 hours of paid student time (used to design and set up the Waste Off exhibition). Rosemary is also very resourceful, making the most of staff and student skills, for example working with a student to design a new range of recycling posters and stickers.
Communication issues	LCF is split into 3 schools across 6 sites so communicating with all staff and students is no mean feat. Rosemary has worked hard to build strong relationships with key colleagues across the college, ensuring that messages, event news and best practice stories are disseminated as widely as possible.
Lack of engagement	Although there are pockets of engaged students and staff in different areas of the college, reaching a wider audience and engaging with people who wouldn't be classed as 'green' can be a challenge. By running a wide range of projects touching on different aspects of sustainability and linking this into their curriculum and learning, Rosemary has managed to reach out to new groups of students.

Performance and results

Giving staff and students a range of opportunities to engage with sustainability in the ways they feel are valuable and relevant to their skills offers them opportunities to contribute to the institution's sustainability vision.

Since the launch of the volunteering programme, staff have pledged more than 70 hours (two weeks of full-time work) to local projects. Beyond the obvious benefits, the cross-pollination of skills, ideas and time will help to build networks across the university.

As a result of the Waste Off challenge, students' innovative pieces were displayed in a three-month exhibition open to the public at a local organisation and are now going to be displayed at each of the college sites. Student feedback from the project has demonstrated that it has changed the way they feel about designing and making, with one commenting that "We are interested in recycling and upcycling materials as we feel that we, as fashion students, hold the most responsibility... to make sustainability more integrated within the community".

The future

Lessons learned

- Ensuring the relevant colleagues are on board from day one is vital to project success;
- Use as many communications methods and tools as possible to reach the widest audience;
- Embrace the broad definition of sustainability, encompassing social as well as environmental activities – this will help to get buy in from more staff and students.
- Don't be put off by lack of financial resources – get creative! Look for alternative funding sources and use people's skills to maximum benefit.

Sharing your project

Examples of Rosemary's communication and engagement with others include:

- Engaging with students on a number of levels, including lecturing on various courses about sustainability and climate change issues, running workshops for students on sustainable fashion, speaking at induction events to nearly 1,000 students (and building a directory of over 200 students who receive regular communications from Rosemary about relevant projects and news);
- Creating a sustainability intranet page as a reference for staff and students;
- Speaking at the LCF 'all staff' meeting (to nearly 500 staff);
- Working with the UAL Sustainability Team to provide information and updates which are shared through the UAL Sustainability blog <http://blogs.arts.ac.uk/sustainability/> and Meet The Tide website <http://www.meetthetide.com/> and Twitter feed @meetthetide

What has it meant to your institution to be a Green Gown Award finalist?

To win a Green Gown award would be an outstanding achievement for London College of Fashion, UAL. As a University we are working hard to embed principles of sustainability into everything we do. When our work is recognised in this way it really helps to galvanise staff and students and underlines that the work we are doing must continue and that we're heading in the right direction.

Further information

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As Rosemary is currently away on maternity leave, please contact her replacement, Victoria Johnsen, for further information:

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<http://www.arts.ac.uk/about-ual/sustainability-at-ual/>

<https://twitter.com/meetthetide>

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