

Technician Commitment Steering Group

Tuesday 11 October 2022

11.00 – 12:00

Meeting Room 1, level 5, Sherfield Building, South Kensington

Minutes

Meeting #16

Attendees

Present:

Tim Venables	Institutional Lead for Technician Commitment (Chair) (TV)
Joel Abrahams	Biological Research Officer, Surgery & Cancer (JA)
Naweeda Ahmad	People & Organisational Development Coordinator, POD (NA) (minutes)
Paul Brown	Mechanical Workshop Instrumentation Manager, Physics (PB)
Ailish Harikae	People & Organisational Development Consultant, POD (AHR)
Allison Hunter	Technical Operations Manager, Life Sciences (AH)
Ken Keating	Technical Operations Manager, Bioengineering (KK)
Russell Stracey	RSM Workshop Supervisor, Materials (RS)
Dr Sharron Stubbs	Senior Laboratory Manager, Infectious Disease (SS)
Angela Williams	Learning and Development Officer, Estates (AW)
Daniela Bultoc	Senior OD Consultant, POD (DB)

Apologies:

Rakesh Patel	Head of Maintenance, Estates (RP)
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Agreed Actions

- Carry out a Mentimeter poll about social media at the next Technicians' Network event to understand the views of the technical community (AH/AHR/SS/NA)
 - Circulate the slides presented under agenda item #3 to the Steering Group (AHR)
 - Consider the draft question set for the survey on authorship and acknowledgment and send any feedback to AHR (All)
 - Organise a subgroup meeting to consider the nomination of technicians for external award schemes (NA)
 - Create a list of internal award recipients outlining why they were nominated (AHR)
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Minutes

1. Welcome and apologies (TV)

The Chair welcomed guest speaker, Daniela Bultoc, Senior OD Consultant, and new member, Naweeda Ahmad, People & Organisational Development Coordinator, to the meeting. The Steering Group also recorded its thanks to Alice Dickerson for supporting the work of the Technicians' Network.

2. Minutes and matters arising from the last meeting (TV)

- The minutes of the last meeting were deemed to be an accurate record of discussions.
- Actions from the last meeting were considered. It was noted that:

*Technicians' Network to consider **inviting external delegates or hosting a regional networking event***

AHR, SS and AH had been liaising with Louise Sherlock from the Research Office in relation to the latest round of grants from the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), which were designed to support the mobility of early career researchers and other groups, including technicians. As part of Imperial's submission, the Technicians' Network had bid for funding to expand the Spring Term Technical Staff Forum to a larger event with a biotechnology and biosciences focus, possibly with a speaker from industry, open to those in other Technician Commitment institutions. AH mentioned that she was also bidding for funding to undertake an international exchange to the Technical University of Munich. There had been a tight deadline for submissions and funds obtained needed to be spent between January and March 2023. SS added that the Technician Commitment Institutional Leads Group for London and the South-East was holding a regional networking event on 30 December at King's College London, open to Imperial technicians.

3. Presentation & Discussion: Technician Commitment action plan - progress at the mid-point (AHR)

AHR told the Group that the current [Technician Commitment Action Plan](#) ran from January 2021 to December 2023 and that 31 June 2022 had been the mid-point. In early 2024, Imperial would need to submit an impact report on the three-year plan for peer review. AHR went on to speak in detail about the progress made to date across four key areas: Visibility, Recognition, Career Development and Sustainability. Please refer to *Appendix - Technician Commitment Action Plan: Progress at the Mid-Point* for full details. In summary:

Visibility

- There had been an increase in the open rate of the *Technician Commitment Newsletter* and technical staff had featured in 23 Imperial News stories, a considerable increase on the last action plan period. Technicians had also been included in College-wide campaigns such as Imperial People, Shifting the Lens and Feeling like a Scientist.
- The Technicians' Network Summer Event had been expanded from a one-day conference to a full week of workshops, networking, and tours, which had received good feedback. However, more needed to be done to increase participation.
- Early planning was underway with Comms for an exhibition to raise the profile of technicians at the College. This would coincide with the next Technicians' Festival and would most likely take the form of an online campaign and a series of framed portraits.
- No progress had been made yet to engage with social media channels to share news about, and for, the technician community.

Recognition

- There had been 52 internal award recipients from the technical community in total for 2021 and 2022, as well as external accolades including Papin Prize nominees, the election of AH to Fellow of the IST and PB's Institute of Physics Honorary Fellowship. It was also noted that KK would be receiving an Imperial College Medal. The most recent staff survey indicated that 65% of technicians felt valued and recognised compared to 49% in 2019 and 47% in 2017.
- Professional registration applications had declined since the removal of the face-to-face assessment route by the Science Council. The most recent round of support had included additional group and 1-1 sessions, and several participants were preparing to submit applications. A new programme of support for engineering technicians would launch in 2022.

Career Development

- The most recent staff survey indicated greater satisfaction among technicians in relation to opportunities for growth and development. There had been limited engagement with mentoring, but nine technicians had requested coaching during the first 18 months of the action plan. Engagement with leadership and management development had increased and there had been 13 dedicated career and personal development sessions for the technical community. Technicians continued to be very well represented among established staff undertaking apprenticeships.
- Seven facility tours had taken place and work was underway within People and Organisational Development to develop an infrastructure to support internal shadowing.

Sustainability

- The Laboratory Technician Apprenticeship Scheme had successfully launched, as had new technical apprenticeship schemes in Estates and ICT.
- The Steering Group had successfully appointed a technical staff representative to the College's EDI Forum and the Technicians' Network had run EDI-focused events. Technicians were engaging with the talent and leadership development programmes run internally through the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre and with external initiatives such as the Herschel Programme for Women in Technical Leadership
- Seven Imperial technicians had volunteered so far for the Technicians Gallery Live Programme, an outreach initiative with the Science Museum.

The Steering Group discussed the information reported in the presentation.

- There was some discussion about the timing and location of the next Technicians' Festival. It was agreed that plenty of notice should be given, and that activity should be focused over one week after the end of the Summer Term, when teaching had finished. JA made the point that focusing activity at South Kensington made it harder for technicians at other campuses to participate. It was noted that the BBSRC-funded event would take place at White City.
- There were mixed feelings about whether Yammer was an appropriate channel for sharing news with the community. AH mentioned the #Iamatechnician campaign at the University of Bradford. Some felt that smaller networks or wikis could be useful for sharing equipment or 'putting questions out there' to the technical community. Examples were shared of networks at College successfully using Teams. AH suggested that a Mentimeter poll should be used at the next event to gather suggestions in relation to social media. **Action: AHR**
- In relation to Professional Registration, it was agreed that time had been a factor in the decline in applications. The Group suggested that individual mentoring with colleagues who were already registrants should be facilitated, as should the use of study days to

work on applications. There were also renewed discussions about 'professional registration' being listed as a desirable criterion in person specifications.

- AW mentioned that a recent survey within Estates had indicated that technical staff preferred face-to-face training to online sessions.
- It was agreed that AHR's slides would be circulated to the Steering Group and that members would make TV and AHR aware of any additional comments.

Action: AHR

4. Update: Acknowledgement of technical staff contributions to research outputs (TV)

TV reminded the Steering Group that a survey on authorship and acknowledgment for the technical community was under development. A draft question set had been circulated ahead of the meeting and members should contact AHR with any feedback.

Action: All

5. Resilient Leadership in Action Programme (DB)

- DB told the Steering Group about a new flagship programme focused on leading teams and people within Higher Education. The Resilient Leadership in Action Programme would provide hands-on experience, coaching, a resilience framework, developmental plan and evidence-based approach. It aimed to provide a safe space for leaders to consider their strengths and vulnerabilities, build confidence and self-awareness, and learn to navigate change, uncertainty, and chaos.
- The Programme had been delivered once before at Imperial to Fellows and early career researchers. This year, People and Organisational Development wished to include Senior Technical staff (at level four and above) who were supporting research. The Programme would run from 24 to 26 May 2023 and applicants would need to complete a short, written application form.
- Feedback on the last iteration of the Programme had been positive; participants reported that it had given them a clearer sense of their future direction and greater confidence about making resilient decisions. DB felt that the Programme would be useful for technical staff and could reduce isolation, build engagement and help foster greater mutual understanding across job families.
- The Chair asked if the focus of the Programme was upwards or downwards management and whether aspiring leaders would get the same benefit from participating. DB said that the Programme was relevant to all and included a number of experiential activities (such as chairing a meeting).
- The Steering Group was very supportive of the Programme being made available to the technical community. PB suggested that suitable participants could be identified with the help of Department Operations Managers and Technical Operations Managers. AH flagged that the Herschel Programme for Women in Technical Leadership was also engaging aspiring managers at the lower levels; care should be taken in the timing of advertising the two courses so that they were not in competition with each other.

6. Nomination of technicians for external award schemes (TV)

- Following discussions at the last meeting, TV confirmed that a smaller sub-group would be convened to discuss the nomination of Imperial technicians for external award schemes. The first meeting would take place later in the Autumn Term. Everyone in the Steering Group would be invited, but members could opt out if they wished to. It was agreed that NA would identify a suitable date and circulate a calendar invite.

Action: NA

- AH said that she would welcome a list of internal award recipients from the technical community outlining why they had been nominated. It was agreed that AHR would collate this ahead of the next meeting.

Action: AHR

7. Any Other Business (TV)

There was no other business.

Next meetings:

Friday 9 December 2022, 11.30-12.30 (Award sub-group)

Wednesday 1 February 2023, 11:00-12:00

Appendix - Technician Commitment Action Plan: Progress at the Mid-Point

Imperial College
London

Technician Commitment Action Plan: *Progress at the Mid-Point*

Ailish Harikae (People & Organisational Development)

11 October 2022

**SUPPORTING
OUR PEOPLE**

POD
People and
Organisational
Development

Technician Commitment Action Plan: *Progress at the Mid-Point*

1. Recap: Technician Commitment action areas and timeline
2. Progress at the mid-point
3. Work still to do
4. Questions and comments

Technician Commitment Action Areas

VISIBILITY

Ensure that all technicians within the organisation are identifiable and that the contribution of technicians is visible within and beyond the institution

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Enable career progression opportunities for technicians through the provision of clear, documented career pathways

RECOGNITION

Support technicians to gain recognition through professional registration and external awards schemes

SUSTAINABILITY

Ensure the future sustainability of technical skills across the organisation and that technical expertise is fully utilised

POD | People and Organisational Development

Where are we on our journey?

Our current, three-year action plan runs from **January 2021** to **December 2023**

31 June 2022 was the mid-point

We need to report on progress to Operations Committee

Early in 2024, we will submit for peer review an impact report on our three year plan



POD | People and Organisational Development

So how are we doing?



POD | People and Organisational Development

23 news stories featuring technicians or referencing their contribution
(compared to 14 during the 24 months of our first action plan)
22,900 unique page views

570 Newsletter subscribers
Open rate **62.5%**

VISIBILITY

10 technicians profiled in *Imperial People* campaign
Including **6 female technicians**

1 technician included in *Shifting the Lens* and *Feeling like a Scientist* campaigns

Technicians' Festivals

Participation is gradually increasing

3 Technical Staff Forums
+ Increased participation from Estates

2021: 72 attendances across 6 offerings

2022: 84 attendances across 11 offerings

2 Technicians' Festivals
+ Larger in size and scope

In 2022, 100% rated the event they attended high/very high in terms of usefulness and facilitation

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VISIBILITY

Work still to do...

- Increase participation at events
- Increase newsletter subscribers
- Engage with social media channels to share news about, and for, our technicians (e.g. Yammer channel?)
- Hold an exhibition to celebrate the diversity of our technical community (Summer 2022)

POD | People and Organisational Development

52 internal award recipients from the technical community

(In 2021, 27 individual technicians and 5 technical teams were recognised for their contributions during Covid!)

External accolades:

5 Papin Prize nominees in 2021

Allison Hunter elected to Fellow of the IST

Paul Brown awarded Institute of Physics Honorary Fellowship

RECOGNITION

Professional Registration applications are down

Cohort	Participants	Applications
Spring 2019	16	16
Spring 2020	8	8
Summer 2020	7	7
Spring 2021	12	0
Summer 2022*	9	1
	52	32

65% of technicians feel valued and recognised for the work they do (2022 Staff Survey)*
Compared to 49% in 2019 and 47% in 2017

*2% behind College average of 67%

*Although 4 more from 2022 group are close to submission

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RECOGNITION

Work still to do...

- Get Science Council **professional registrations** back on track
- Re-launch **Engineering Council professional registration** support (Spring 2023)
- Introduce a mechanism for making **external award nominations** (Autumn 2022)
- Launch **authorship and acknowledgement** resources (Spring 2023)
- Recognition of teaching technicians – HEA

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Limited engagement with **mentoring**
But 9 technicians requested coaching

Engagement with **leadership & management** development increasing

7 Facility tours
20 participants (2022
Techs' Festival)

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Technicians **very well represented** among established staff undertaking **apprenticeships**

2019-20 **16** technicians started programmes
2020-21 **8** technicians started programmes
2021-22 **16** technicians started programmes

13 dedicated sessions for technicians
attracting 110 attendances

(Assertiveness, Emotional Intelligence, interview skills, career planning, financial wellbeing and more)

Satisfaction with learning & development is down ☹
60% favourable in 2022 compared to 64% in 2019 (Staff Survey) *but...*

Greater satisfaction in relation to **opportunities for growth and development**
63% favourable in 2022 compared to 54% in 2019 and 50% in 2017 (Staff Survey)

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We have had positive feedback about tours...

"Very interesting tour - well done to Physics techs for putting it on. In future festivals, it would be good to visit more workshops/labs."

"Really enjoyed the tour, found it very interesting and great to see what other technicians within the university are up to!"

"It was very interesting - I would join the tour again to see other facilities if there's an opportunity. Thanks!"

"It was just great to see what others are doing, so I would urge others to go to everything really."

... and external shadowing!

"All told I had a very interesting day here. I got to see proper pharma processing equipment in use and another institutions' way of teaching. I also saw some familiar lab equipment within the other labs. A highly worthwhile experience and I hope to accommodate a reciprocal visit later this year."

- Andrew Macey (Chemical Engineering), who visited the University of Sheffield

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CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Work still to do...

- Renewed efforts to **promote mentoring**
- Complete first stage of career pathways (Lexonis) work and run a pilot
- **Offer more tours** to get technicians moving around! (Technicians' Festival 2023)
- Develop a **structure to support internal shadowing** (work underway in POD)

POD | People and Organisational Development

Laboratory Technician Apprenticeship Scheme successfully launched

Plus new technical apprenticeship schemes launched in **Maintenance** and **ICT!**

Technical staff representative on EDI Forum

SUSTAINABILITY

7 Imperial technicians have volunteered so far for Science Museum outreach programme alongside *Technicians, The David Sainsbury Gallery*

5 female technicians participated in inaugural cohort of national **Herschel Programme for Women in Technical Leadership**

4 technicians have completed Calibre (2021 and 2022)
Data for IMPACT outstanding

Half-day EDI focused Technicians' Conference held in 2021 and two dedicated **EDI-themed sessions** offered at 2022 Technicians' Festival

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SUSTAINABILITY

Work still to do...

- Introduce a mechanism to support **peer to peer learning** (*ties in with Yammer/social media project*)
- Appoint a new Technical Staff Rep for EDI Forum (Ji Yong Yoon is leaving) ☹️
- Develop further support and opportunities for outreach, following discussions last term

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**Any thoughts,
questions?**

