

Staff Survey 2019 – Technicians’ Discussion Forum
Technicians’ Network Summer Event – 23 July 2019

1. In what way do you want to be more challenged?

- By having the opportunity to shadow others
- By visiting (or doing secondments in) different departments
- By doing a range of different tasks at work (not just a volume of tasks of one kind)
- By having the opportunity to apply for membership of a professional body or for professional registration
- Through better conversations with my line manager about my career development
- Through a clear, defined career pathway for technical staff at Imperial
- By having the opportunity to mentor others (and to access mentoring myself)

2. What are the causes of your work pressure?

- Having a heavy workload and competing demands
- Others having unrealistic expectations and setting unreasonable deadlines
- Staff shortages (and covering for these)
- A lack of physical resources (and issues like equipment downtime)
- Imperial’s hierarchical structure and the poor attitude of some academic staff to technicians
- Seasonal peaks related to student timetables and the academic year
- Needing to keep pace with new regulation (e.g. around health and safety)
- Poor communication
- Poor planning
- A lack of emotional support

3. What is getting in the way of colleagues working together?

- A reluctance to share resources across departments (and no incentives to do so)
- Each department having its own separate systems and processes
- A tendency to email rather than ask colleagues in person
- Not having time to engage with others because of staff shortages, heavy workloads and being busy
- In some areas there isn’t a culture of team working
- Imperial has a competitive culture
- ‘Compartmentalisation’ by job title prevents people from helping each other (e.g. RAs cannot help with technical work in the lab as they are grant-funded)
- A lack of understanding of what technical roles involve and a lack of appreciation for technical skills, particularly among academic staff
- Personality clashes
- People not having the same priorities
- Having multiple sites and departments split across campuses

4. What information is missing to help all technical staff understand College purpose and objectives and the reasons for change?

- Using different media to communicate might help (e.g. posters, podcasts) rather than long emails that staff do not have time to read
- More in-person meetings to share information
- More frequent comms about the wider College

5. Unacceptable behaviour towards each other - what would prevent this happening?

- Training and support for all new managers
- More active bystander training, empowering people to call out poor behaviour
- HR drop-in sessions (the centralisation of HR has made it feel more remote and less accessible)
- A zero-tolerance policy
- Building a culture where people feel comfortable and protected
- Building trust that the College's systems for managing bad behaviour are effective
- In general, people feeling less stressed and having more manageable workloads

What is preventing individuals reporting this?

- A fear of being singled out as a troublemaker
- A fear of reprisals and damage to one's career (academia is a small world and people are genuinely afraid to report a supervisor)
- People worrying that the situation will not be resolved and that they will have to continue to work with the perpetrator regardless
- Bullying has been normalised, with many technicians experiencing it regularly from PIs
- People not understanding exactly how/where to go to report an issue
- There is a lack of trust in the system; people don't think issues will be handled effectively

6. What else can we do to realise our Technician Commitment goals around progression, development and recognition?

- Expand support for professional membership and professional registration
- Introduce recognition awards for technicians
- Introduce more apprenticeship programmes
- Develop a clear career pathway for technical staff at Imperial
- Enable better quality conversations with managers about career development and better PRDPs
- Demonstrate a commitment to technical staff at a senior level
- Organise technical forums at a local level (e.g. departmental)
- Enable visits for technicians to other areas, shadowing and secondments
- Encourage more flexible working for technicians
- Create opportunities for technicians to share best practice
- Make sure technicians are being given time to access training and development