

Technician Commitment Steering Group

Thursday 27 June 2019

10:30 – 11:30

Room 441, Sherfield Building, South Kensington campus

Minutes

Meeting #7

1. Welcome and apologies

Present:

Nazia Hirjee	Faculty Operations Officer, Natural Sciences (Chair) (NH)
Joel Abrahams	Biological Research Officer, Department of Surgery & Cancer (JA)
Lindsay Comalie	Organisational Development Consultant (LC)
Ailish Harikae	Apprenticeships Manager, Secretary to the Steering Group (AHR)
Allison Hunter	Technical Operations Manager, Life Sciences (AH)
Angela Williams	Senior Learning and Development Officer, Estates Division

Apologies

Paul Brown	Mechanical Workshop Instrumentation Manager, Physics
Gareth Hyde	NHLI Safety & Technical Services Coordinator, NHLI
Ken Keating	Laboratory Manager, Bioengineering
Russell Stracey	RSM Workshop Supervisor, Materials

2. Minutes and matters arising from the last meeting

NH/AHR

- AHR:
 - The Summer 2019 edition of *Health and Safety Matters* magazine will feature several pages of content on Technician Commitment activity.
 - Updates to the Technicians' Portal planned for the summer include an external awards calendar, a more comprehensive list of external conferences and a repository of resources from past Technicians' Network events.
 - Steering Group members have nominated people in their areas to help scope needs for the laboratory technician apprenticeship programme and this work will start in September 2019.
 - The new PTO mentoring scheme has been promoted to technicians and Heather Combe (Faculty Safety Advisor, Medicine) spoke about her experience of informal mentoring at the June Technical Managers' Forum in South Kensington.
- NH: I have spoken to Richard Martin about the College's Honours and Awards Committee and will be attending the next meeting on 2 July 2019.

- LC: Former Technician Commitment Steering Group Member Dawn Beaumont was profiled in the [Imperial People](#) blog in June prior to her retirement.
- **Actions (outstanding from the last meeting):**
 - KK and AHR to meet to discuss the Technical Academy initiative.
 - AHR to engage with HR/Recruitment on including professional registration as desirable in job descriptions.
 - AHR to analyse awards received this year by technical services staff.

3. Technicians' Network Summer Event

AHR

- AHR:
 - The summer event will take place on 23 July at 170 Queen's Gate and is open for booking. The event will be promoted across channels in the coming days.
 - The programme has been confirmed and circulated to the Steering Group.
 - A breakdown of Staff Survey 2019 data for the Technical Services job family has been requested and will be presented at the event. At the recent Staff Survey Roadshows, Louise Lindsay, Director of HR and Organisational Change, posed several key questions based on the Staff Survey results and these will form the basis of the Discussion Forum at the summer event.
 - There will also be an update on the Technician Commitment (by NH), a session on mental health awareness (by Anita Hall, Senior Teaching Fellow, Life Sciences), a keynote on the history of technicians at Imperial (by Anne Barrett, College Archivist and Corporate Records Manager) and a talk on career pathways for technicians, within and beyond Higher Education (by KK and AH).
 - There will be space in the Drawing Room for an exhibition for six to eight exhibitors; a steer from the Steering Group on who to invite (and what to charge, if appropriate) would be helpful.
- LC: It would be a good idea to showcase mental health and wellbeing support for staff and students as part of the exhibition. LDC could help to showcase support for staff and Debra Ogden, Deputy Director of Student Services, may be able to help.
- AH: For commercial exhibitors, £150 seems reasonable for the number of delegates attending (c.70) and the time available for exhibitors to engage with them.
- NH: Given our commitment to supporting professional registration, let's invite the Science Council, the Engineering Council and the equivalent body for ICT professionals.
- JA: We could also include the Institute of Animal Technology.
- AH: Let's also offer a place to Unite.
- NH: To help promote the event, it would be a good idea to have a paper flyer / poster.
- **Actions:**
 - AHR to approach exhibitors
 - NH to share Louise Lindsay's Staff Survey Roadshow slides with AHR
 - AHR to create a poster and display / distribute this.

4. Naming of technicians in publications

AH

- AH: The Royal Microscopical Society's [Core Facilities Publication Policy](#), circulated to Steering Group Members in advance of the meeting, was identified by Jane Srivastava,

Flow Cytometry Facility Manager in Life Sciences. As our Technician Commitment Action Plan includes a pledge to create a consistent policy whereby technicians who have contributed to research outputs and grants are named as authors in publications, Jane was keen for this example to be brought to the attention of the Steering Group.

- NH: This is an excellent example and in the first instance, I suggest that we share it with Nick Jennings, Vice-Provost (Research and Enterprise) and get a steer from him on the appropriate channel(s) for getting approval for something similar at Imperial (which may be through Faculty Research Committees). It would be helpful to build case studies to support this (i.e. examples of technical staff who have been named in publications and what their contribution was).
- LC: It might also be useful to find out through our networks what other institutions are doing.
- AH: The Crisanti Lab in Life Sciences is a good case study area, as many technicians are doing scientific work that contributes to research outputs and are named in papers.
- JA: I have been named on 20 papers. I tend to ask to be added (either as an author, or to be acknowledged), which not all technicians are comfortable about doing.
- **Actions:**
 - Steering Group members to share case study examples with NH.
 - AH and LC to engage with other HEIs to provide benchmark information.
 - NH to approach Nick Jennings to discuss.

5. Update on report launch – Technicians & student wellbeing and mental health LC

- LC: I recently attended the launch of [*Technicians: Providing frontline and vital support for student mental wellbeing*](#) with KK and AHR, which is based on research by a consortium of organisations including the Technician Commitment, the University of Nottingham and the University of Liverpool. These groups were represented at the event and were very passionate about the research. There was an important message around the vital pastoral role many technicians play in relation to students. The report's recommendations are useful and overlap with our own findings. We will be continuing to promote the wellbeing support and training available at the College as part of our own wellbeing agenda and the wider development offering; we need to make sure that these are promoted effectively through technical managers and through the Technicians' Portal.
- NH: It might be worth engaging with Debra Ogden, Student Services, on the role technicians play in providing support to students, so that this feeds into the broader work underway on student support.
- JA: More generally, we also need to make sure that, at department-level meetings, technicians are represented as a matter of course. This is something I am willing to pilot in my own area and report back on.
- **Actions:**
 - LC and AHR to look more closely at the recommendations and to report back at the next meeting
 - JA to request a regular 'slot' for technical services matters at department-level meetings in Surgery and Cancer.

6. Update on career pathways project

AHR

- AHR: Since the last Steering Group meeting, the project team have engaged with various stakeholders to ensure alignment with other projects at College, including Rob Farace (Head of Recruitment and Progression) and Audrey Fraser (Head of Reward, Engagement and Policy). On the recommendation of the Steering Group, Imperial has now become an affiliate member of the National Technician Development Centre (NTDC). Ian Tidmarsh, Specialist Advisor for NTDC, will be visiting for an initial meeting on 30 July to provide an overview of NTDC's career pathways tools and how these are being used by other Higher Education Institutions. Meeting participants will include Strategic HR Partners, representatives from Unite, representatives from Recruitment and Progression and Reward and Engagement. As part of the project, I have also met with Beth Stallwood, the consultant who developed the College's *Career Moves* materials, and she has provided a template and some useful guidance for capturing career journey case studies for technical staff and managers.

7. Update from the Technician Commitment Institutional Leads Group

AH

- AH: This new group includes representatives from Queen Mary University, King's College London, the University of Reading, UCL and other London/South East Technician Commitment signatories. It is the only group of its kind in the country and meets once a term to discuss progress at our institutions. At our most recent meeting, we discussed professional registration and streamlining the invoicing process for the Science Council's Common Application Process. We also discussed career progression for core facility managers and a survey run by the Institute of Cancer Research on career development for this group (e.g. where do they get their training from, what are the common issues they face, etc.), which I would like us to consider running here. We also discussed joint training days for facility managers in the region and sharing resources across institutions.
- LC: It might be a little too soon for another survey, as we have just had the staff survey.
- NH: Unless participation was limited to facility managers.
- **Action:** AH to find out more about the survey and share with the Steering Group.

8. Update on professional registration

AHR

- AHR: our pilot programme of support for professional registration for technicians is coming to an end and in-person assessments with the Science Council are planned for 29 and 30 July at South Kensington and 2 September at Hammersmith. There are 16 participants on the programme from six departments. Three will be applying for CSci and 13 will be applying for RSci. The quality of written submissions has been very high. Over the summer, I will be reviewing the pilot and putting in place a programme for next academic year. I have a contact at the Engineering Council and will be engaging with her on support for Engineering Technicians who would like to register. I also organised an event on professional registration for technicians at Careers@Imperial Week on 20 June, which was well-received. Two technicians, Yu

Liu (Research Technician, Bioengineering) and Jane Srivastava (Flow Cytometry Facility Manager, Life Sciences), who have both achieved RSci status (with IST and the Royal Society of Biology respectively), shared their personal experiences of the process and what they have gained from it. They are excellent champions for professional registration.

8. Update on Science Museum project

LC

- AH: As reported at the last meeting, the Science Museum have secured funding from the Gatsby Foundation to open a permanent exhibition about technicians, geared at 11 to 16 year olds making choices about their careers. The curators are in the early stages of scoping content for the gallery and as part of their research, they have started a series of planned visits to Imperial's workshops and laboratories to meet some of our technicians. They will also be visiting a number of other organisations. We have enjoyed hosting them and hope that there may be opportunities for our technicians to get involved as ideas for the exhibition develop. In the meantime, I will represent Imperial on the Advisory Panel for the exhibition and keep the Steering Group updated.

9. Any Other Business

NH

- NH: AHR, KK and I gave a presentation on the Technician Commitment at HoDs lunch last week. This included a general overview and updates on the career pathways and professional registration strands. The audience was very supportive of these projects and Alice Gast was particularly interested in the Science Museum's technician project.
- AH: I have secured funding from the Imperial-TUM Collaboration Fund to share best practice and knowledge in supporting technical staff with counterparts at the Technical University of Munich. I plan to visit and engage with technical staff in Munich and to host a return visit to Imperial. I will report back on what I learn.
- **Action:** AH to report back on learning from the Munich visit.

Summary of Actions

- *KK and AHR to meet to discuss the Technical Academy initiative.*
- *AHR to engage with HR/Recruitment on including professional registration as desirable in job descriptions.*
- *AHR to analyse awards received this year by technical services staff.*
- *AHR to approach exhibitors for the Technicians' Network Summer Event.*
- *NH to share Louise Lindsay's Staff Survey Roadshow slides with AHR.*
- *AHR to create and display a poster to promote the summer event.*
- *Steering Group members to share case study examples of technicians named in research publications with NH.*
- *AH and LC to engage with other HEIs to provide benchmark information on technicians being named in research publications.*
- *NH to approach Nick Jennings to discuss technicians being named in research publications.*
- *LC and AHR to discuss the recommendations made by the technicians and student wellbeing and mental health report and report back at the next meeting.*

- *JA to request a regular 'slot' for technical services matters at department-level meetings in Surgery and Cancer.*
- *AH to find out more about the survey for core facility managers run by the Institute of Cancer Research and share at the next meeting.*
- *After her visit to Munich, AH to report back on learning from the TUM collaboration.*