

Technician Commitment Steering Group

Thursday 22 October 2020
10:00 – 11:30
MS Teams

Minutes

Meeting #10

1. Welcome and apologies

Present:

Nazia Hirjee	Faculty Operations Officer, Natural Sciences (Chair) (NH)
Lindsay Comalie	Organisational Development Consultant (LC)
Ian Day	Maintenance Manager, Estates (ID)
Ailish Harikae	Apprenticeships Manager (Secretary to the Steering Group) (AHR)
Allison Hunter	Technical Operations Manager, Life Sciences (AH)
Ken Keating	Technical Operations Manager, Bioengineering (KK)
Okan Kibaroglu	Head of Business Operations, ICT (OK)
Russell Stracey	RSM Workshop Supervisor, Materials (RS)
Joel Abrahams	Biological Research Officer, Surgery & Cancer (JA)
Dr Sharron Stubbs	Senior Laboratory Manager, Infectious Disease (SS)
Monica Suarez	Learning & Development Lead, ICT (MS)

Apologies

Paul Brown	Mechanical Workshop Instrumentation Manager, Physics
Rakesh Patel	Head of Maintenance, Estates
Angela Williams	Learning and Development Officer, Estates

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

- 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:
 - Career pathways for technicians: AHR advised that this stream of work had been re-launched recently and that she and KK had been engaging with OK in relation to Lexonis (talent management software).
 - Technical Academy: KK told the Steering Group that he and AHR had been looking at systems and had held a useful meeting with the new Head of Learning and Organisational Development. They had identified that an informal, user-lead approach, possibly hosted on Yammer, would be most

useful to the community. The idea would be to encourage technicians to share knowledge and resources, without the need for heavy administration behind the scenes.

- RS made the point that this level of informality might not be suitable for training in areas/equipment with a higher safety level and where formal sign-off and record-keeping was required.
 - AH supported the idea of an informal noticeboard for technicians to share information, as it might help to break down silos that technical staff often experienced.
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- Naming of technicians in research papers: AH reported that eight technicians in Life Sciences (of the 60 she had contacted) had been named as authors in research papers and could be included as case studies. NH said that these examples would be useful when this strand of work was revisited, after the REF submission. She added that the policy was likely to take the form of a wider ethics policy.

3. Update on Technician Commitment peer review involvement (LC)

- LC told the Steering Group that she and AHR had responded to a call for peer reviewers by the Technician Commitment. As members of the peer review pool, they would be involved in assessing impact reports and action plans from other signatory institutions, which would be an interesting experience. LC and AHR had recently attended a peer review training session. LC felt that Imperial's draft report aligned with best practice.

3. Technician Commitment: Stage 2 self-assessment & action plan (NH/AHR)

- There was some discussion on how to better engage technical staff in Estates and ICT with the Technician Commitment initiative, as part of the stage 2 action plan.
 - ID mentioned that technical staff in the Maintenance teams did not necessarily feel that they were technicians, even though their job roles and learning needs aligned with this group. He felt they would benefit from engagement with the initiative. NH made the point that this had been the case initially in other areas as well; she suggested that some focused work with Estates, supported by Nick Roalfe, might be useful.
 - Similarly, MS reported that staff in ICT did not consider themselves to be technicians either. MS was keen to better understand the Technician Commitment initiative and to look at where efforts could be aligned and opportunities could be shared, particularly around networking and professional registration.

- AHR explained the self-assessment and action planning process and flagged that the draft paperwork would go to Provost's Board for approval on 24 November, with submission to the Technician Commitment on 11 December. She talked through the draft documentation before inviting feedback on Imperial's proposed submission.

- NH emphasised the importance of the EDI-related actions. She suggested that the exhibition on female technicians could be expanded to celebrate the diversity of Imperial's technicians in its broadest sense. This was supported by the Steering Group. RS added that it could be held in the Main Entrance, rather than the Blythe Gallery, to give it a higher profile.
- LC said that a balance needed to be struck between sustaining existing activity and adding new actions, as there was a danger of over-committing. NH said that, following sign-off by Provost's Board, consideration could be given to resourcing the new plan.
- LC suggested establishing sub-groups to take elements of the plan forward. AH agreed that there was more readiness and appetite in the technical community now to own some of the activity.
- It was agreed by the Steering Group that AHR and NH could proceed with submitting the documentation to Provost's Board for approval.

Action: AHR/NH

4. EDI Analysis of Imperial's Technical Community (AHR)

- Following discussions at the last meeting on the research by STEMM-CHANGE into the [EDI challenges facing the Higher Education technical community](#), AHR presented an analysis of Imperial's technical services workforce (c.500 of the 650 technical staff at the College), based on HR data (the slides are available to view [here](#)). The key findings were as follows:
 - The majority of Imperial's technical services staff are male (61%), which mirrors sector-level data (59% male). However, the picture varies across disciplines; the majority of technicians in the Faculty of Medicine are female (62%) but in the Faculty of Engineering, just 19% of technicians are female. This reflects the situation at sector level.
 - A third of Imperial technicians are aged over 50. In the Faculty of Engineering, 39% of technicians are aged over 50. At sector level, STEMM-CHANGE found that 30% of technicians are aged over 51 and that in Physics and Engineering, 45% of technicians are over the age of 51.
 - Imperial's technical services staff are more ethnically diverse than the sector at large, with 47 nationalities represented. 62% of Imperial's technical services staff are White, compared to 84% at sector level. However, we do not represent the diversity of the local population.
 - Disability declaration rates are higher for technical services staff than for the College overall (6% compared to 5%) and are equivalent to the sector average (6%).
 - 37 staff in the technical services job family are line managers (to note: many senior technical managers are professional services staff and so are not captured by this data). This is not a diverse group: line managers are 84% male, 78% White and 70% aged 50-69.
 - 34% of Imperial's technical services staff are on fixed-term contracts (compared to 19% at sector level). Within the Faculty of Medicine (the Faculty with the highest proportion of female technicians) this increases to 60%. Within Engineering, Natural Sciences and Support Services, the proportion of

technical services staff on fixed term contracts is considerably lower (14%, 30% and 8% respectively). Most of our technicians work full time (92%).

- It was agreed that, in light of the analysis, the EDI actions in the action plan were appropriate. It was also agreed that it would be useful to share the data with technicians at a Technicians' Network event.

Action: AHR/AH/SS

5. Update from Institutional Leads Group (AH)

- AH provided an update from the most recent meeting of the Technician Commitment Institutional Leads Group, which meets once a term and includes representatives from Queen Mary University, King's College London, the University of Reading, UCL and other London/South East Technician Commitment signatories. Key updates:
 - The group are planning an online networking and information-sharing event, open to all technicians at member institutions, and due to take place in December 2020.
 - A number of arts-based institutions have joined the group; technical staff in these organisations appear to face similar issues to STEM technicians.
 - Discussions have taken place about drawing on membership of SES (Science and Engineering South) to help promote Technician Commitment activity.

6. Technicians' Network events 2020-21 (AHR)

- AHR reported that the annual Technicians' Network event, held virtually in September 2020, had gone smoothly. Speakers/topics included the Provost on the Academic Strategy, Natalie Kennerley from the National Technician Development Centre on her career journey, Prof. Tim Horbury on the Solar Orbiter, mini-talks on COVID-19 research and a forum discussion on the Technician Commitment action plan. There were 74 registrations from 23 departments, although numbers on the call varied throughout the day, peaking at 40. Feedback was positive, with 92% rating the event high or very high in terms of usefulness and facilitation, and 83% rating it high or very high in terms of likelihood of applying what you have learnt. 100% of those who gave feedback said they would recommend the event to other technicians.
- AHR said that she had met recently with SS, AH and Stephanie Ludwig (Learning and Development Centre) to start planning a Technical Managers' Forum event for December 2020 on the theme of ethnic diversity. No events had been planned yet for 2021.

7. Update on professional registration (AHR)

- AHR reported that the most recent cohorts of professional registrants (14 science technicians in total, across two groups) had been successful in their assessments. The second cohort had undertaken a completely remote programme and assessment, which had worked very well.
- A group of ten engineering technicians were working towards registration with the IET and initial meetings with applicant support mentors had taken place in October 2020.

- SS said that some of the departments within Medicine had not been aware of the ongoing commitment to fund professional body membership for science technicians who had undertaken professional registration the year before. Clearer communications around this might be useful.

Action: AH

8. Any Other Business

- Technical University of Munich (TUM)
 - AH reported that conversations were ongoing in relation to her visit to TUM and that an online meeting was most likely in the first instance. Her grant had been extended to allow her to visit in person once that became possible. KK and Pat Evans (Department Operations Manager for Life Sciences) were also interested in participating.
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Summary of Actions

New:

- *AHR and NH to submit the impact report / action plan to Provost's Board for approval.*
- *AHR/AH/SS to hold a Technicians' Network event on the EDI data.*
- *AHR to ensure better communication of the ongoing costs related to professional registration.*

Older / Ongoing:

- *AH and AHR to draw up a participant list of core facility managers to be surveyed.*
- *KK and AHR to continue to engage with ICT / Lexonis for the career pathways project.*
- *Steering Group members to share further case study examples of technicians being named on publications with NH / AHR.*
- *KK and AHR to continue work on the Technical Academy initiative.*