

Technician Commitment Steering Group

Wednesday 2 March 2022

11.30 – 12:30

SALC 2, Seminar and Learning Centre, Sherfield Building, South Kensington

Minutes

Meeting #14

Attendees

Present:

Tim Venables	Institutional Lead for Technician Commitment (Chair) (TV)
Joel Abrahams	Biological Research Officer, Surgery & Cancer (JA)
Ian Day	Maintenance Manager, Estates (ID)
Alice Dickerson	People and Organisational Development Administrator, POD (AD)
Ailish Harikae	Apprenticeships Manager, POD (AHR) (Minutes)
Allison Hunter	Technical Operations Manager, Life Sciences (AH)
Ken Keating	Technical Operations Manager, Bioengineering (KK)
Dr Sharron Stubbs	Senior Laboratory Manager, Infectious Disease (SS)
Angela Williams	Learning and Development Officer, Estates (AW)

Apologies:

Paul Brown	Mechanical Workshop Instrumentation Manager, Physics (PB)
Okan Kibaroglu	Head of Business Operations, ICT (OK)
Rakesh Patel	Head of Maintenance, Estates (RP)
Russell Stracey	RSM Workshop Supervisor, Materials (RS)

Agreed Actions:

- Undertake a survey of the technical community to understand whether technicians are currently being named as authors or acknowledged in research papers (AHR).
 - Work towards completing the research on authorship and acknowledgment and making a recommendation to Provost Board in the summer, as part of interim progress report on the Technician Commitment (AHR).
 - Consider ideas for formal mechanisms for Imperial technicians to be recommended for external award schemes and share at the next meeting (all).
 - Move forward with plans for a summer event, incorporating a conference, workshops, and facility tours (AD, AHR, AH and SS).
 - MI Talent report on technical skills in UK Higher Education to be circulated to all for review and discussed at the next meeting (AHR and all).
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Minutes

1. Welcome and apologies (TV)

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 Newsletter

The bi-monthly newsletter would be made available in print format from Spring 2022 and thereafter; Covid-19 restrictions had made it difficult to arrange printing for the last edition.

Financial wellbeing sessions

Three financial wellbeing sessions for the Technicians' Network had been arranged for March and April 2022. These would be delivered by Planned Future (Workplace Financial Education).

3. Recognition of technicians contributing to research outputs (AHR)

- AHR had taken advice from Robyn Price, Bibliometrics & Indicators Manager (Library Services), in relation to Imperial's Technician Commitment action to create a consistent policy on authorship for technical staff who had contributed to research outputs. AHR reported that:
 - Most journals used the [International Committee of Medical Journal Editors \(ICMJE\) criteria](#) to define authorship, so Robyn had advised against creating a new policy; this risked institutional involvement in authorship disputes when mechanisms existed at journal level to mediate.
 - An awareness-raising exercise on the ICMJE criteria (to include, for example, a talk for technicians at the summer event and a webpage with information on the Technicians Portal) had been recommended.
 - Robyn agreed that a consistent approach to *acknowledgement* (e.g., of facilities maintained by technical staff, or of technical staff who had contributed in some way to research) would be more beneficial; this could also prompt researchers to include technicians as authors if meeting the ICMJE criteria, but without getting too prescriptive.
- The Steering Group welcomed greater clarity on authorship and acknowledgement, both for technical staff themselves (who could feel unsure/uncomfortable about asking to be recognised in the academic record) and for researchers.
- To better understand the current situation, TV suggested that a short survey of the technical community on authorship and acknowledgement should be undertaken. **(Action: AHR)**
- It was agreed that AHR and TV would make a proposal on acknowledgement to Provost Board as part of their interim update on the Technician Commitment. **(Action: AHR/TV)**

4. Update from Technician Commitment signatory event (TV)

- TV reported that he, SS and AH had represented Imperial at the Technician Commitment Signatory Event on 23 November 2021 at the House of Lords. This was the first in-person event since the pandemic. Technician Commitment signatory institutions had been presented with an award, which AH showed to the Steering Group.

- The event's key themes overlapped with Imperial's action plan: professional registration, engaging with professional bodies, recognising the significant contribution of technicians during the pandemic, and external award schemes for technical staff.
- TV said that he was keen to introduce an internal mechanism for technical staff to be nominated for external awards (such as the Papin Prizes). KK made the point that notices about award schemes were systematically circulated, but that individuals were not always clear on what was required. AH suggested that the award nomination process was off-putting since writing did not come naturally to all technical staff.
- There was support for the formation of a College-level group to manage the external award nomination process in respect of technical staff. TV encouraged the Steering Group to consider what form this could take and said that this would be discussed at the next meeting. **(Action: All)**.

5. Technicians' Network events (AHR)

- AHR reported that two well-attended Technicians' Network events had been held virtually since the last Steering Group meeting: a talk by ID about Maintenance Technicians on 24 November and an apprenticeship-themed session on 10 February.
- AHR then advised that planning was underway with AD, AH and SS for this year's summer event, which would comprise an in-person conference at South Kensington (with the option to join virtually), facility tours and career development workshops.
- AHR asked whether micro-shadowing should also be included. AH, JA and others felt that facility tours were a good first step and would give technicians an opportunity to experience other areas of College.
- It was agreed by all that plans should be progressed for the summer event. **(Action: AD, AHR, AH and SS)**.

6. Update from Institutional Leads Group (SS, AH)

- SS and AH reported that, at the Spring Term Technician Commitment Institutional Leads Group meeting, there had been discussions about establishing cross-institutional shadowing for technical staff, as well as the recent Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) initiative to support the mobility and development of technicians. The institutions represented had agreed that *suggesting* placements for technicians to apply to, rather than inviting an open call for proposals, was likely to be more effective, since technical staff did not necessarily know what was out there.
- Professional registration (PR) had been on the agenda and PR applications across all institutions had reduced considerably since the removal of the option for registrants to undertake a face-to-face assessment.
- The Group was hoping to offer an in-person networking event later in the year.

7. Update on professional registration (AHR)

- AHR told the Committee that Stephen Franey (Science Council Applicant Support Mentor) would be running another programme of support for science technicians to undertake professional registration in the Summer Term. The fully written application route had been a significant barrier to last year's cohort of registrants (none of the twelve had applied). However, the Science Council had developed new resources in light of changes to assessment and Imperial's programme would be re-configured to incorporate these.

8. Outreach, including an update on Science Museum collaboration (AHR)

- AHR and TV told the Steering Group that a meeting was planned for 30 March 2022 with Andrew Tebbutt (Head of Student Recruitment and Outreach) to discuss ways to engage technical staff with outreach and engagement activities.
- AHR told the Steering Group that two early career technicians from Imperial (an apprentice and an ex-apprentice) had been involved in a pilot project with the Science Museum since September 2021 called the Technician Youth Collaboration. This had involved working with an advisory panel of young people to develop an activity for visitors to explain what it was like to be a technician. The activities developed were now being delivered as part of the live programming that accompanied the Science Museum's Technician Gallery. One activity involved building a prosthetic limb for a ballet dancer (replicating a project in Bioengineering) and the other involved putting together components for an electronic device that lit up and generated sound.

9. AOB (TV)

- The Steering Group commended the technician apprentices who spoke at the 10 February Technicians' Network event on the quality of their presentations.
- AHR flagged that the MI Talent Commission had launched its 'Technical skills, roles and careers in UK higher education and research' report on 1 February 2022. Based on two years of research, the report made 16 recommendations for employers of technicians, many of which aligned with or built on the themes of the Technician Commitment. AHR proposed that this should be circulated for review to the Steering Group and discussed at the Summer Term meeting. **(Action: AHR)**
- AH mentioned that the UKRI was undertaking a broad consultation on the effectiveness of its current approaches to supporting impact. Technicians and other groups of support staff were encouraged to respond.

Next meeting:

7 June 2022, 11.00 – 12.00