

Technician Commitment Steering Group

Tuesday 7 June 2022
11.00 – 12.00
MS Teams

Minutes

Meeting #15

Attendees

Present:

Tim Venables	Institutional Lead for Technician Commitment (Chair) (TV)
Joel Abrahams	Biological Research Officer, Surgery & Cancer (JA)
Paul Brown	Mechanical Workshop Instrumentation Manager, Physics (PB)
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)
Okan Kibaroglu	Head of Business Operations, ICT (OK)
Rakesh Patel	Head of Maintenance, Estates (RP)
Russell Stracey	RSM Workshop Supervisor, Materials (RS)
Dr Sharron Stubbs	Senior Laboratory Manager, Infectious Disease (SS)
Angela Williams	Learning and Development Officer, Estates (AW)

Agreed Actions:

- MI Talent Commission recommendations to be revisited at a future meeting (AHR)
 - Steering Group members to promote the Technicians' Festival in their areas (All)
 - Technicians' Network to consider inviting external delegates to events or hosting a regional networking event (AHR/AH/SS/AD)
 - Establish a subcommittee to manage external award scheme nominations (TV/AHR)
 - Develop and share a standardised slide pack for technicians delivering talks (AHR)
 - Promote coaching to the technical community (AHR/AD)
-

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:

Authorship

Robyn Price, Bibliometrics & Indicators Manager (Library Services), would be making a presentation on authorship and acknowledgement at the Technicians' Summer Conference. AHR would continue her dialogue with Robyn regarding acknowledgement of technicians contributing to research outputs.

3. MI Talent Commission Report (AHR)

- AHR presented a summary of the Midland Innovation (MI) Talent Commission's recent report, [Technical skills, roles and careers in UK higher education and research](#), the culmination of two years of research and insight into technical skills, roles and careers across the sector. MI Talent, a project funded by the Research England Development Fund and based across the Midlands Innovation consortium of institutions, had undertaken the largest ever national survey of technicians, analysed HESA data, and held focus groups with technical staff and managers, students and non-technical staff.
- The report made 16 recommendations to support and build technical capability across Higher Education and research institutes, which dovetailed with the Technician Commitment action areas. AHR noted that Imperial had activity underway to align with most of the recommendations.
- There was some discussion on the following recommendations:
 - **Appropriate and consistent costing for technical roles in research grants.**
AH reported that she and Pat Evans, Department Operations Manager for Life Sciences, had raised concerns about costing challenges directly with the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC).
 - **Supporting technicians to engage in outreach and public engagement.**
Although Technicians were willing to support outreach, it was agreed that finding time to do so could be challenging, given heightened scheduling and workload pressures; a framework was needed to support this type of activity.
 - **Professional development opportunities for technical staff.**
Many technicians were struggling to engage with continuing professional development (CPD), despite opportunities being available at the College. Having a clearly stated number of development days for technical staff (like the ten days for postdoctoral researchers), integrating CPD requirements explicitly within PRDP documentation, and urging academics to give technical staff space to engage in CPD would all be helpful. Development needed to be framed as part of a technician's role and not an 'addition to the day job'. In some areas, technicians did not engage in CPD unless regularly prompted; it was agreed that they also needed to take ownership.
 - **Involving technical expertise within the recruitment process.**
The inclusion of technicians on selection panels for technical roles was happening systematically in some areas but not others. The group agreed that involving technicians, particularly in the practical assessment of technical skills, considerably enriched the process. PB suggested that a larger pool of technicians should be trained to undertake recruitment and selection.
- It was agreed that the MI Talent Commission's recommendations should be revisited at a future meeting. (**Action AHR**)

4. Technicians' Festival 2022 (AHR)

AHR reminded the Steering Group that the Technicians' Festival would be running from 13 to 20 June 2022. The programme included facility tours, career and professional development workshops and a hybrid Technicians' Conference on 16 June. The Conference would include

talks on authorship, the Science Museum collaboration and professional registration. Bookings had been lower than usual but were steadily increasing. AHR asked Steering Group members to promote the event in their areas. **(Action: All)**

5. New ICT apprenticeship scheme (OK/AHR)

OK and AHR informed the group that ICT had launched an ambitious digital apprenticeship scheme, with the goal of attracting diverse recruits to the College at the junior level, freeing up experienced colleagues and supporting new ways of working. Three digital apprenticeship standards would be launched, in two phases: Phase 1. data analysts and software developers (12 apprentices had been recruited to start in June 2022); and Phase 2. IT solutions technicians (18 roles, timeframe to be defined). ICT would monitor whether its team and workspace could support a second large intake of apprentices, particularly in a flexible working environment.

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

- SS and AH reported that, at the Summer Term Technician Commitment Institutional Leads Group meeting, there had been discussions about professional registration (PR). Member institutions were continuing to report lower engagement and success with PR since the face-to-face assessment route had been removed.
- Cross-institutional networking had also been on the agenda. AH asked whether external delegates could attend Imperial's Technicians' Network events. AHR said that external delegates had joined the Technicians' Conference in the past on an ad-hoc basis but that events had never been advertised to external audiences. It was agreed that this would be a beneficial way to increase participation and create opportunities for cross-institutional learning. It was agreed that this idea would be considered when future events were planned. **(Action: AHR/AD/AH/SS)**
- AH reported that the Institutional Leads group had funding available for two technician networking events for the Southeast region, so there would be opportunities for Imperial technicians to visit other institutions next academic year. TV suggested that Imperial could volunteer to host a cross-institutional networking event. AH said that the Department of Life Sciences had done this in the past for HEaTED and UBMA but that a lot of time had been required. TV recommended that the idea could be revisited next academic year, with sufficient planning time. **(Action: AHR)**

7. Discussion: Nomination of technicians for external Award schemes (TV)

- TV reported that AD had compiled a list of external award schemes that Imperial technicians could be nominated for. Many of the schemes opened for applications early in the calendar year. He suggested that a subcommittee of the Steering Group should be established to identify a process for making nominations; the group should start to meet in the Autumn Term. The plan was supported by all. **(Action: AD/AHR/TV)**

8. Outreach and engagement (TV, AHR)

- TV told the Steering Group that a meeting had taken place in March with Andrew Tebbutt (Head of Student Recruitment and Outreach) and colleagues to discuss ways to engage technical staff with outreach and engagement activities. Several ideas had been proposed, which AHR summarised as follows:
 - Maker Challenge: recruiting technician judges to assess young people's projects and/or inviting technicians to deliver mini talks (virtual or in-person) to Maker Challenge participants.

- Raising awareness of the activities of the public engagement team (promoting training, events etc.) and consider appointing a technician representative to their network.
- White City Careers Events: involving a small number of technicians and/or apprentices based at White City to attend and engage with participants.
- There was support for the proposals, but it was agreed that a clear framework to enable technicians to participate easily was needed (e.g., a standardised slide pack for technicians delivering talks). RS mentioned that he would be giving a talk to a school in the Autumn and would appreciate such a resource. AH and AHR said they had slide packs that could be adapted for this purpose. **Action: AH, AHR**

9. AOB (TV)

- AW reminded the Steering Group that College had a Coaching Academy, which offered staff up to four sessions with a qualified coach. She said the Academy would be introducing an online system to match coaches and coaches. AW said that coaching should be promoted to the technical community to encourage uptake, as it was a useful development tool and challenged people to be more proactive in shaping their careers. It was agreed that AD/AHR would promote through the Technicians' Network Newsletter. **Action: AH/AHR**

Next meeting:

11 October, 11.00-12.00