

Technician Commitment Steering Group

Tuesday 19 October 2021
11.30 – 12:30
MS Teams Meeting

Minutes

Meeting #13

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)
Ailish Harikae	Apprenticeships Manager, POD (AHR) (Minutes)
Allison Hunter	Technical Operations Manager, Life Sciences (AH)
Rakesh Patel	Head of Maintenance (RP)
Louise Sherlock	Funding Strategy Manager (LS)
Russell Stracey	RSM Workshop Supervisor, Materials (RS)
Dr Sharron Stubbs	Senior Laboratory Manager, Infectious Disease (SS)
Ji Young Yoon	Mechanical Workshop Technician, Bioengineering (JY)
Angela Williams	Learning and Development Officer, Estates (AW)

Apologies:

Lindsay Comalie	Senior People & Organisational Development Consultant, POD (LC)
Ken Keating	Technical Operations Manager, Bioengineering (KK)
Stephanie Ludwig	People & Organisational Development Administrator, POD (SL)
Okan Kibaroglu	Head of Business Operations, ICT (OK)
Monica Suarez	Learning & Development Lead, ICT (MS)

Agreed Actions:

- Technicians' Network Newsletter to be made available in printed format (AHR).
 - Financial wellbeing sessions to be arranged for the Technicians' Network (AHR).
 - Further consideration to be given to the type of support provided for professional registration, given the fully written assessment route now in place (AHR).
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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:

Technician Commitment renewal

There had been some positive coverage of the Technician Commitment renewal, including a story on the College news website ([link here](#)).

Professional Registration

Seven professional registrants from Imperial had successfully undertaken training with the Science Council to become professional registration assessors.

3. Review of action plan

- It was agreed that the actions in the plan were still appropriate.
- There was some discussion on the Technicians' Network Newsletter and its recipients. AHR explained that technical staff were encouraged to subscribe and that there were currently c.600 subscribers. AW asked whether printed copies of the bi-monthly newsletter could be made available for technical staff in Estates and AHR agreed that this could be arranged. **(Action AHR)**

4. Summer Event 2021

- AHR reported that the first Technicians' Festival had gone ahead as planned from 28 June to 2 July 2021. There had been 70 attendances in total over the week, which was comparable to the one-day summer conferences held in previous years. Offering a range of bite-sized sessions over a week did not increase engagement and had been more work to organise and deliver. A physical space (lecture theatre) had been made available for technical staff to view the virtual conference sessions, but nobody had used this facility. AHR provided a summary of the sessions provided and attendances:

Assertiveness Skills for Technicians (9 attendances)
 Career Moves for Technicians (21 attendances)
 Sustainability Forum (22 attendances)
 EDI Forum (13 attendances)
 Mentoring (4 attendances)
 Interview Skills for Technicians (1 attendance)

- AW said that the event had been promoted heavily within Maintenance but that nobody had attended in the end. RP added that it was challenging to pass messages on and that using noticeboards in offices was worth considering next time. RS suggested that promotion from within teams (i.e., technicians being made aware and encouraged to participate by their managers) might be more effective.
- PB suggested offering sessions with wider appeal, as some of the talks would only attract certain groups of technicians. He thought there might be interest, for example, in a session on pensions and financial planning, or on a talk from ICT. AW had organised a series of talks for Estates on financial wellbeing and it was agreed that AHR should explore something similar for the technicians. **(Action: AHR)**
- AHR also made the group aware that planning for an Autumn Term event was underway with SS and AH and that Ian Day (Maintenance) would be delivering a talk on the Maintenance technical team and his own career journey.

5. BBSRC Flexible Talent Mobility Account

- Louise Sherlock attended from the Research Office to make the group aware of a funding opportunity through the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research

Council (BBSRC) to support the mobility and development of technicians. The initiative was open to staff working in a technical role related to plants, microbes, animals (including humans) or the tools and technology underpinning biological research. It allowed staff to get an insight into another institution or a different sector. Imperial had made an application for funding, which covered a range of activities, including secondments and short exchanges, which would need to take place between 1 December 2021 and 31 March 2022. The opportunity was also open to early career researchers.

- The initiative had been advertised through Heads of Department, Department Operations Managers, and various internal networks including the Technicians' Network. A briefing session for technicians was planned for 8 November.
- AH mentioned that the Technician Commitment Institutional Leads Group for London and the SE was also planning to coordinate a series of mini exchanges across institutions. She had made the group aware of the BBSRC opportunity and would also promote through NTDC and UKBSA.

6. Reach Out MakerSpace – outreach opportunities (AH)

- AHR reminded the group that there was an action in the plan to encourage and support technicians to get involved with Outreach. Andrew Tebbutt, Head of Student Recruitment and Outreach, had given a talk as part of the EDI Forum at the Technicians' Festival and had shared some proposals for engaging staff with Outreach work in White City. These included activities such as supporting the Maker Challenge, an evening programme for local young people aged 14 to 18, by facilitating sessions, mentoring students, sharing expertise, or helping students to problem-solve using equipment.
- The group felt that, as these opportunities would involve a commitment outside of working hours, some consideration needed to be given to, for example, reimbursing travel costs, offering some TOIL, or a 'thank you' event to show appreciation to those volunteering, etc.
- AW suggested that opportunities at other campuses would be welcome. She also suggested that shadowing a technician or providing work experience opportunities, to help young people to build an understanding of the type of work they do, could also work well.

6. Update from Institutional Leads Group (SS)

- SS reported that the Technician Commitment Institutional Leads Group had hosted a large virtual networking event in September, with representation from across the institutions in the Group. The four Technician Commitment pillars of visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability were explored through presentations by different institutions. Common themes included the EDI challenges affecting the technical community and emerging skills gaps.
- An in-person event was planned for early in 2022.
- The group's Autumn Term meeting would be taking place later in October.

7. Update on Professional Registration (AHR)

- AHR reported that the programme of support for science technicians undertaking professional registration had been delivered in the summer term as planned and comprised three virtual sessions held between April and June. There were twelve in the group and, unfortunately, none had applied yet for professional registration. Some had asked to have an additional session in the Autumn term, which was being organised. AHR explained that a key barrier was the removal of face-to-face

assessments, which had been popular and successful route to registration. With a fully written application, registrants needed to write 1,000 words for each of the five sections (rather than 300-500 words, which was recommended for face-to-face assessments). There was also no 'hard deadline' for submitting.

- It was agreed that AHR should give further consideration to the type and configuration of support provided, ahead of next year's programme. **Action: AHR**

8. AOB (TV)

- TV reported that a number of Imperial technicians from a range of areas had been nominated for Papin Prizes, which was very positive.
 - AH recorded the Steering Group's thanks to Lindsay Comalie, who would be leaving Imperial at the end of the year.
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