Technician Commitment

Evaluating Impact through Self-Assessment & Future Action Planning

Organisation: Imperial College London
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To provide some context, please provide a brief profile of your organisation (up to 250 words):

Imperial College London is a world top ten university with an international reputation for excellence in teaching and research. Consistently rated amongst the world’s best universities, Imperial is committed to developing the next generation of scientists through collaboration across disciplines.

Located in the heart of London, Imperial is a multidisciplinary space for education, research, translation and commercialisation, harnessing science and innovation to tackle global challenges. Imperial brings together intersecting disciplines, industries and sectors across four major areas to further our understanding of the natural world, solve major engineering problems, lead the data science revolution and improve health and well-being. Emerging areas of research include the development of low-carbon technologies, stem cell therapy for stroke and how to turn light into matter.

Imperial is home to 17,000 students and 8,000 staff. Over 6,700 degrees are awarded by Imperial College London every year. Imperial is an international community, attracting undergraduates from more than 125 countries. The College focuses on the four main disciplines of science, engineering, medicine and business and is renowned for its application of these skills to industry and enterprise.

Please tell us how your organisation defines its technicians:

Technicians are defined broadly and encompass staff across a range of functions and disciplinary backgrounds across the College’s academic departments and support service divisions. The definition includes staff members in the Technical Services job family, in addition to those staff members with technical job titles in the Professional Services, Support Services and Learning & Teaching job families.

As evidenced by the summary below, our technicians comprise staff across most of the College’s departments (Aeronautics, Bioengineering, Chemical Engineering, Civil and Environmental Engineering, Chemistry, Clinical Sciences, Computing, Design Engineering, Earth Sciences, Electrical and Electronic Engineering, ICT, Life Sciences, Maintenance, Materials, Mathematics, Mechanical Engineering, Medicine, National Heart & Lung Institute, Physics, Public Health, Safety and Surgery and Cancer). They undertake a variety of roles across research and teaching including laboratory support, specialist facility operations,
How many technicians are there in your organisation? Please provide some information on where they are based and/or how they are structured (in terms of subject/discipline/department):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of technicians</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Natural Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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Technical staff are based across all the College’s campuses in London and Silwood Park. They are structured by department, as set out in the previous question.

Please provide details of initiatives/programmes/activities that were already in place for the technical community within your organisation prior to becoming a signatory of the Technician Commitment:

**Visibility**

We launched the College’s Technicians Network in 2013. It is a staff network for all members of staff in the technical job family or in technical roles, which aims to build links and establish common ground as well as providing further opportunities for development and collaborative working including exchange of resources, knowledge and experience. The Network’s activity includes annual Imperial College Technicians’ network activities and termly technical managers meetings.

The achievements of College technicians have been recognised by internal awards. The President’s Awards for Excellence in Research and Education include categories for support roles and teams, which have been won by technicians. These are prestigious awards to recognise a variety of staff for their excellent contributions to the College’s mission: [http://www.imperial.ac.uk/staff/college-staff-awards/presidents-awards-for-excellence/](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/staff/college-staff-awards/presidents-awards-for-excellence/). The Provost’s Awards for Excellence in Health & Safety and Awards for Excellence in Animal Research have had many technician winners since their inception in 2015: [https://www.imperial.ac.uk/safety/safety-by-topic/provosts-awards-for-excellence-in-health-and-safety/](https://www.imperial.ac.uk/safety/safety-by-topic/provosts-awards-for-excellence-in-health-and-safety/); [https://www.imperial.ac.uk/research-and-innovation/about-imperial-research/research-integrity/animal-research/awards/](https://www.imperial.ac.uk/research-and-innovation/about-imperial-research/research-integrity/animal-research/awards/). The Learning and Development Centre has a dedicated “Development for Technicians” webpage to promote development opportunities available within the College and via our registration with professional bodies: [http://www.imperial.ac.uk/staff-development/development-options/od-courses/technicians/](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/staff-development/development-options/od-courses/technicians/). We further developed the content of this site, making it more comprehensive, in conjunction with building the College’s Technicians’ Portal (referred to later).
Recognition

The College has relationships with several of the professional bodies for technical staff including the Institute of Science and Technology and HEaTED and has encouraged technical staff to apply for professional registration to support their careers and professional development. The Learning and Development Centre also ran the first workshop in 2016 to help staff in the process of becoming professionally registered. The aim to increase Science Council registrations with a year on year increase among technical staff (with a target of 50% eligible technical staff registered by 2020) was included in the College’s most recent Athena SWAN Action Plan (applications for registrations from both male and female staff are to be proportional to the numbers of male/female staff).

Career Development

The College participated in the HEFCE Catalyst Project, providing guidance for the UK HE Technical Taxonomy and Competency Framework. The College’s membership of HEaTED provides a reduced rate for training and networking events. We have also provided external workshadowing opportunities via Outside Insight (www.heioutsideinsight.co.uk) – of the Imperial participants to date, 10% have been technicians, which is reflective of the proportion of technicians relative to the staff body as a whole.

Technicians can draw on the College-wide resources available to support Career Development: http://www.imperial.ac.uk/staff-development/development-options/planning-your-development/career-development-support.

Sustainability

The Learning and Development Centre’s “Training the Trainer for Technical Staff” course supports technicians in skills training for new colleagues.

The College also runs apprenticeship schemes – four-year programmes designed to train the future technicians who go on to work in our world-class workshops and laboratories, contributing to the research and teaching that we do. Our technician apprentices specialise in Mechanical or Electronics Mechatronics Engineering, or take part in the Maintenance Technicians Apprenticeship Scheme: http://www.imperial.ac.uk/job-applicants/opportunities/apprenticeships/technician-apprenticeship-scheme/
http://www.imperial.ac.uk/job-applicants/opportunities/apprenticeships/maintenance-apprenticeship-scheme/

Furthermore, a Technical Academy has been developed in the Department of Bioengineering which includes courses run by technicians and cross-functional seminars.

The Technician Commitment aims to ensure visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability for technical staff across higher education and research. Please tell us of any initiatives your organisation has put in place to address these themes since becoming a signatory of the Technician Commitment:

Visibility

- We have established a Technician Commitment Steering Group to advance activities in respect of technicians’ development and recognition, under Imperial’s commitment to action in the four areas identified by the Science Council as affecting technical staff. The Steering Group comprises technical managers from across the organisation and meets monthly to agree actions and review progress. The
Steering Group reports to the Provost’s Board, a high-level College committee which oversees the College’s core academic mission of education, research and translation, and the Faculties and academic support services that deliver this mission.

- We have created a Technicians’ Portal (http://www.imperial.ac.uk/technicians-portal) which will serve as a one-stop shop for technicians looking for resources related to the Commitment, registration, career development, the Technicians Network, and relevant news and events. The portal features video and written case studies of College technicians who have undertaken the process of professional registration.
- We relaunched the Technicians’ Network Newsletter to become a bi-monthly feature – a source of information on training, development, events and career opportunities for technical staff: http://www.imperial.ac.uk/technicians-portal/technicians-network/newsletter/
- Our Provost, James Stirling, launched the Portal at an event celebrating technicians at the College on 31st January 2018, at which the Science Council presented the College with its Employer Champion Award. http://www.imperial.ac.uk/news/184738/imperial-launches-support-technicians/
- Our President, Alice Gast, included a senior technician in the selection process for the College’s next Provost.
- We have analysed and publicised the results of the Technicians Skill Survey, undertaken as part of the HEFCE Catalyst Project, to get a better picture of the technician community, establish who has professional registration and contribute to the learning needs analysis – this will inform the focus of plans under this framework. http://www.imperial.ac.uk/staff-development/development-options/od-courses/technicians/technicians-skills-survey/

Recognition

- We have applied for and been awarded the Science Council’s Employer Champion status, a key point of which is “provide resources that support the registration process”.
- We have successfully nominated a technician at the College for recognition in the Queen’s birthday honours: Paul Brown, Mechanical Instrumentation Workshop Manager, has been awarded an MBE for services to higher education.
- We have secured commitment from the College’s senior management to support technicians financially with professional registration and membership of the relevant professional body.

Career Development

- In response to demand identified in the Technicians Skills Survey, we have created a Mental Health First Aid Lite course specifically aimed at technical staff members.
- We regularly advertise technical roles and development opportunities, such as Talent and Leadership Development Programmes, through the Technicians’ Network.

Please provide a 24-month action plan, detailing future plans to ensure your organisation addresses the themes of the Technician Commitment and details of how impact will be evidenced: (this may be detailed here or attached to this document as an appendix):

Visibility

- Our Technicians Network will hold an annual network event to promote technicians in the organisation.
- Our Technicians’ Portal will build on its case studies to ensure that technicians across the organisation are visible on our website.
- We will publicise the success of our technicians in news stories and press releases, including participation in outreach and widening participation activities and wider work within their
communities. Our Technicians Network will receive a regular newsletter promoting development opportunities available for technicians.

- We will create a consistent policy to ensure that, where technicians have contributed to research outputs and grants, they are named as authors of publications.
- Our activities under the Commitment will be visible on our Technicians’ Portal.
- We will engage with line managers of technicians to promote our activities and support them to support their technical staff in engaging with activities under the Commitment.

**Recognition**

- We recognise that the professional registration process requires considerable support and will provide a structured programme of events, mentoring, guidance, obtaining financial support and coordination to support our technicians’ success in achieving professional registration.
- We will create a process and mechanism whereby our technicians are nominated for prestigious awards and honours internally and externally.
- We will promote role models within our technician community by means of our events, portal and other communication channels.
- We will encourage departments to include registration as a desirable criterion in personal specifications and include professional development in job descriptions.

**Career Development**

- We will create a mentoring scheme for technicians to support them in their career development.
- We will create and promote training and development opportunities for technical staff, leveraging the extensive provision available via our Learning and Development Centre (including leadership and management development programmes, professional skills training, coaching and mentoring).
- We will support technicians to attend relevant conferences organised by external bodies to encourage professional networking and cross-sector learning.
- We will create visible career pathways for technicians to support both increasing functional specialisation and the acquisition of transferable skills, drawing on the Higher Education Technical Competency Framework (https://nationaltechnicianscentre.ac.uk/tdm/uk-hett/). These will be supported by training and development and documented job descriptions which are driven by agreed competencies.
- We will create and promote work shadowing opportunities for technical staff to support their career progression.

**Sustainability**

- We will employ a full-time member of staff to implement, coordinate and manage activities under the Technician Commitment, including supporting technical staff through the professional registration process.
- We will establish a laboratory technician apprenticeship scheme, to complement our existing mechanical, electronics and mechatronics and maintenance engineering schemes, leveraging the apprenticeship levy where appropriate and building on advice detailed in the Technician Development Framework (https://nationaltechnicianscentre.ac.uk/tdm/tech-develop-framework/#prog-designframework/#prog-design).
- We will expand our Technical Academy in Bioengineering into other disciplines, encouraging cross-department training and development, and develop structures for sharing of skills, resources and equipment across the College.
• We will monitor progress of our actions through quantitative and qualitative means, including surveys, tracking of professional registration, tracking of participation in training and development opportunities, measuring of progression and turnover and measuring of uptake of resources within the Technicians’ Portal.
• We will work with the Learning and Development Centre’s talent development and succession planning activities to ensure that technical roles are represented and involved in planned activity.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Please evidence how the ‘technician voice’ was present in the development and formation of the institutional action plan:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This action plan has been developed by the Technician Commitment Steering Group, which comprises technician representatives from across the College. Its contents have been developed in response to feedback received from technical staff by means of the HEFCE Catalyst Skills Survey, the College’s Staff Survey which was undertaken in 2017 and via the technical managers’ forum. The action plan was sent to our Technicians’ Network (528 members) for feedback and discussed informally with groups of technical staff.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Please confirm that your Technician Commitment status and action plan is published on your organisation’s website and provide the relevant URL here:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confirmed. Please see <a href="http://www.imperial.ac.uk/technicians-portal">http://www.imperial.ac.uk/technicians-portal</a></td>
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Signed………………………………………..(Technician Commitment Nominated Institutional Lead)

Date:

Signed………………………………………..(Technician Commitment Signatory – Leader of Institution)

Date: