

IMPERIAL

Technician Commitment Steering Group Meeting

Monday 8 December 2025

14.00 – 16.00

SALC 6, Seminar and Learning Centre, level 5 Sherfield Building, South Kensington Campus

Minutes

Meeting #28

Present:

Tim Venables	Institutional Lead for the Technician Commitment (Chair, TV)
Naweeda Ahmad	Learning and Talent Coordinator, Talent & Culture (NA) <i>Minutes</i>
Tessa Boreham	Facility Manager, Central Biomedical Services (TB)
Paul Brown	Head of Technical Operations, Physics (PB)
Ailish Harikae	Learning & Talent Manager, Talent & Culture (AHR)
Allison Hunter	Head of Technical Operations, Life Sciences (AH)
Kenneth Keating	Head of Technical Operations and Safety, Bioengineering (KK)
Dr Sharron Stubbs	Head of Infrastructure Operations, Faculty of Medicine Centre (SS)

Apologies:

Joel Abrahams	Biological Research Officer, Surgery & Cancer (JA)
Rakesh Patel	Director of Maintenance, Property Division (RP)
Ellen Pengelley	Director of ICT Business Operations, ICT (EP)
Russell Stracey	RSM Workshop Supervisor, Materials (RS)
Thomas West-Robinson	Head of Operational Services, ICT (TW)
Angela Williams	Learning and Development Officer, Property Division (AW)

Agreed Actions from this Meeting:

- Share Technician Commitment Action Plan with new member, Tessa Boreham (NA)
- Provide breakdown of Ignite/Ignite Plus participants by department at the next meeting (AHR)
- Circulate materials from the November 2025 Technician Commitment Signatory Event (NA)
- Organise an information session and poster campaign on awards (AHR/NA)
- Revisit the idea of an internal 'Technician of the Year' award at the Summer Term meeting (NA)
- Share feedback on the Garden Party and Long Servers Dinner with the organisers (AHR)
- Create a dedicated page on internal and external awards on the Technicians' Portal (NA)

Ongoing Actions:

- Revisit with the Head of Recruitment whether the Technician Commitment logo can be added to the Jobs website and welcome guide for new staff (TV and AHR)
- Organise an information session on the Laboratory Technician Apprenticeship Scheme to be held during National Apprenticeships Week 2026 (AHR, NA)

1. Welcome and apologies (TV)

The Chair welcomed new member Tessa Boreham (Central Biomedical Services) to the Steering Group and gave a summary of its aims and objectives. It was agreed that the Technician Commitment Action Plan would be shared with TB. **(Action NA)**

Apologies were received from Joel Abrahams, Rakesh Patel, Ellen Pengelley, Russell Stracey, Thomas West-Robinson and Angela Williams.

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

Paper 1: Minutes – 15 October 2025

The minutes from the last meeting were agreed to be an accurate record of discussions.

3. Brief update on Ignite Programmes and Technician Secondment (AHR)

Ignite Programmes

AHR reminded the Steering Group that Imperial had ten places available for Ignite and Ignite Plus, development programmes created by the Institute of Cancer Research, with partners at King's College London, UCL and the Francis Crick Institute, and funded by Wellcome. At the previous meeting, AHR had been asked whether technical professionals outside of Life Sciences and Healthcare Research could apply for Ignite Plus. AHR had spoken to the organisers and confirmed that colleagues from adjacent fields were also welcome, provided they could benefit from and contribute meaningfully to the course. AHR advised that internal applications for the programmes had now closed, and ten had been received for Ignite and seven for Ignite Plus (including two from the Faculty of Engineering). AHR would assess the applications and allocate the places, drawing on expertise from the Steering Group if needed. It was agreed that a breakdown of the departments represented would be provided at the next meeting. **(Action AHR)**

Technician secondment

AHR reported that the bid for Enhancing Research Culture funding to facilitate a secondment opportunity for a technician to the Learning & Talent team had been successful. This opportunity would run from February to July 2026 and would involve working two days a week (0.4FTE) on a project(s) that aligned with the themes of the Technician Commitment. The job advert was live and would close on 11 December 2025. Four applications had been received so far. Interviews were tentatively planned for 17 December 2025.

4. Update on Technician Commitment Signatory Event, November 2025 (KK)

KK had represented Imperial at the Technician Commitment Signatory Event on 18 November 2025, which took place in London and was attended by 150 delegates. KK summarised the key themes as follows:

- Redundancy programmes were prevalent across the sector, which could impact on applicant numbers for technical roles at Imperial.
- A number of Higher Education Institutions were centralising and streamlining core facilities (laboratories, workshops) and restructuring technical teams to increase efficiency.
- A national, [early career technicians' network](#) had been established.
- The Institute for Technical Skills and Strategy (ITSS) had published a paper on driving environmental sustainability, which NA would circulate to the Group **(Action: NA)**.
- Sustainability initiatives such as LEAF and My Green Lab were expanding well, but UKRI would be setting up its own version.
- UKRI would also be releasing new guidance on staff cost recovery.

- Universitas 21 had partnered with the Technician Commitment, which could create opportunities for international collaboration and learning.
- [The International Network of Cutting-Edge Bioimaging Facilities and Communities](#) had given an interesting talk.
- The Technician Commitment were planning to move forward with plans for a ranking system of signatory institutions and were looking for volunteers to be involved in a trial.

Some discussion followed on the new sustainability accreditation. It was noted that Central Biomedical Services had achieved a LEAF Bronze Award in Hammersmith and were applying for Silver in South Kensington. There were mixed feelings on the proposal for a ranking system of Technician Commitment signatories. It was agreed that the materials from the event would be shared with the Steering Group (**Action NA**).

5. Driving up award nominations (Chair and All)

Internal schemes

AHR advised that nominations for the internal award schemes were expected to open in January 2026, with the closing date to be confirmed; typically, the nomination window was six weeks. The Chair led a discussion on the internal schemes, and several challenges were highlighted:

- Line managers were unsure about which category to nominate their technicians for.
- Staff making a nomination were unsure about what to include, and what was expected.
- Guidance on what had been recognised in the past, and examples of a well-written nomination, would be welcomed.

Members of the Steering Group who had served on award panels mentioned that the quality of nominations could vary widely, with some failing to mention the scale of the impact or to include impact data to support the case. It was agreed that an information session to de-mystify the process and provide structured guidance should be arranged to coincide with the nomination window and that a poster campaign should also be considered (**Action: AHR/NA**).

There was some discussion on whether a dedicated ‘Technician of the Year’ award (or clearer categories for technicians within the existing schemes) was needed. It was agreed that this should be revisited later in the year. (**Action: NA**)

Steering Group members raised concerns that Garden Party nominees and Long Servers did not feel as ‘special’ as they hoped when they attended these events. There had been an issue with the gift vouchers for Long Servers, for example, and the staff being recognised did not seem to have been listed anywhere public (e.g. Staff Briefing). TV noted that the events had coincided with a major restructure within the People Function, and a period of transition. It was agreed that AHR should feed the concerns back to the Employee Experience team (**Action: AHR**).

External awards

AHR shared details of the main national award programmes for technicians in Higher Education:

Award Scheme	Entries open
Royal Society of Chemistry – Technical Excellence and Apprentice categories	Open now until 14 January 2026
Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) Jean Venables Medal	Tend to open in January

Institute of Physics – Technician and Apprentice categories	Tend to open in February
Times Higher Education Awards - Outstanding Technician of the Year	Tend to open in April and close in June Winners announced November
Royal Society of Biology (RSB) Apprentice of the Year Award	Entries tend to open in June or July
The Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) – Apprentice and Technician categories	Unsure of timeline for 2026
Salters Institute – Technician Award	Tend to open in October
Papin Prizes	Biennial - next round in 2027 Entries tend to open in November and close in February Awards presented in July

It was agreed that these should be advertised in the *Technicians' Network Newsletter* and across other channels, at the appropriate times. A dedicated webpage on the Technicians' Portal should also be created to provide a one-stop shop for information and resources on the internal and external award schemes. **(Action: NA)**

6. Any Other Business, (TV)

Career pathways

The Chair told the Group that he was involved in a piece of work related to the implementation of the new ERP that would contribute to greater standardisation of job titles for technicians and other support staff.

Career programmes

AH felt that greater clarity on the various career development programmes was needed. For example, how the internal career development programme for 3b staff sit alongside external options for mid-career technicians like Ignite? TV clarified that the internal scheme was currently for professional services staff.

Allison Hunter's retirement

The Chair thanked Allison for her energy, enthusiasm and commitment to the Technician Commitment since it was conceived in 2017 and noted that this would be AH's final meeting. AH said she had enjoyed being a member of the Steering Group and had seen tremendous progress over the years.

Date of next meeting: 25 February 2026