

IMPERIAL

Technician Commitment Steering Group

Wednesday 15 October 2025

14.00 – 15.30

Faculty Boardroom, Faculty Building, South Kensington Campus

Minutes

Meeting #27

Present:

Tim Venables	Institutional Lead for the Technician Commitment (Chair, TV)
Joel Abrahams	Biological Research Officer, Surgery & Cancer (JA)
Naweeda Ahmad	Learning and Talent Coordinator, Talent & Culture (NA) <i>Minutes</i>
Ailish Harikae	Learning & Talent Manager, Talent & Culture (AHR)
Allison Hunter	Head of Technical Operations, Life Sciences (AH)
Rakesh Patel	Director of Maintenance, Property Division (RP)
Dr Sharron Stubbs	Head of Infrastructure Operations, Faculty of Medicine Centre (SS)
Angela Williams	Learning and Development Officer, Property Division (AW)

Apologies:

Paul Brown	Head of Technical Operations, Physics (PB)
Kenneth Keating	Head of Technical Operations and Safety, Bioengineering (KK)
Ellen Pengelley	Director of ICT Business Operations, ICT (EP)
Russell Stracey	RSM Workshop Supervisor, Materials (RS)

Agreed Actions

- Survey results from the June 2025 Technicians' Conference to be circulated to all (NA)
- 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)
- Schedule of events for 2025-26 to be circulated to all (NA)
- Consider how to engage Maintenance technicians with planned activity (NA, AHR, RP, AW)
- Find out whether Engineering technicians can participate in IgnitePlus (AHR)
- Prepare a calendar of internal and external award schemes (AHR and NA)
- Organise an information session on the Laboratory Technician Apprenticeship Scheme to be held during National Apprenticeships Week 2026 (AHR and NA)

Minutes

1. Welcome and apologies (TV)

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Paul Brown, Kenneth Keating, Ellen Pengelley and Russell Stracey.

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

Paper 1: Minutes – 4 June 2025

The minutes from the last meeting were agreed to be an accurate record of discussions. It was noted that a survey was undertaken at the June 2025 Technicians' Conference to gauge what type of events would be most welcomed by the technical community. It was agreed that NA would circulate the results following the meeting. **(Action NA)**

3. Career Pathways Action Group - Update (AHR)

Paper 2: Mapping our Technical Workforce (Update 2)

Following on from her presentation at the previous meeting, AHR shared an update on the mapping exercise that she and KK had completed on technical roles at Imperial. Since the last update, additional analysis had been undertaken on reporting lines, contract type and specialism. AHR highlighted that:

- 40% of Imperial's 676 technicians (270 individuals) did not report to another technician, and 22% (146 technicians) reported to a member of Academic and Research Staff.
- Approximately 406 technical roles at the University were research-focused, 103 were teaching-focused, 93 were hybrid (i.e. supporting both research and teaching), and 74 were operational.
- 235 technical staff (35% of all technicians) were employed on fixed term contracts.
- Fixed term contracts were most common in the Faculty of Medicine (51% of technicians in this Faculty) and least common in the Maintenance Division (6% of Maintenance technicians).

AHR said the next step was for the findings to be shared with the Professional, Technical, Operational & Learning (PTO&L) Framework review group to help inform any planned structural changes. KK, AHR and TV would also seek to align with the Technology Specialists Supporting Research & Education Working Group. In addition, the cross-institutional Career Pathways Action Group was developing a 'how to' guide for the sector on mapping the technical workforce.

In the discussions that followed, it was noted that work on job title standardisation was underway across job families and that the outcome of the PTOL Framework review was expected soon. Members also discussed differences between job titles (e.g. Operative vs Technician vs Engineer in the context of Maintenance), the definition of 'senior' in the context of senior technician, and the use of 'Manager' for roles that did not have direct reports. Consideration was also given to communicating the findings to technicians to help them understand Imperial's technical staff structure, the work underway to address inconsistencies, and the importance of individuals taking ownership of their career development and progression.

4. Imperial Insights for Technical Staff – Discussion (AHR and All)

Paper 3: Imperial Insights for Technicians

AHR told the Steering Group that Learning and Talent would be launching a new series of 'Welcome to Imperial Induction sessions' for new starters from each job family. These 90-minute sessions would run once per term and were intended to supplement the standard Imperial Insights induction programme, which all new staff were encouraged to attend. The first session for technicians would take place in January 2026. The workstream lead, Jane Sloan, had proposed an outline and invited feedback and input from the Steering Group.

Steering Group Members welcomed the proposal. TV said that he would be happy to co-facilitate. AW suggested that any technicians who had joined over the last two years should be given the opportunity to participate, and that line managers should be copied into the invitation.

A more general discussion followed on how to make new technicians aware of Technician Commitment activity. AHR told the group that Aneesha Bhumber, ex-Technical Staff Specialist, had approached the Head of Recruitment about having the Technician Commitment logo added to the jobs webpages and including information on the Technicians' Network in the welcome guide for new staff, but had been asked to wait until the rollout of the new ERP. It was agreed that AHR and TV should pick this up again with Jack Leyshon-Richards. **(Action: AHR, TV)**

5. Update from the London and SE Institutional Leads Group (AH & SS)

AH reported that 46 new member institutions had joined the regional group. Stephen Franey (King's College London), one of the original chairs, had retired so one of the recent sessions had been dedicated to him. There had also been discussions on technical staff induction, EDI and apprenticeships. Conferences and events across the member institutions were being shared systematically. UCL had received funding from the UK Institute of Technical Skills and Strategy (ITSS) to facilitate their internal and cross-institutional work and had received an Impact Award. Ninety technicians from 50 institutions had signed up to attend the Technical Managers in Universities workload allocation event on 29 October.

6. Technicians' Network events planned for 2025-26 (NA)

NA updated Members on the events planned for the upcoming academic year including Lunch and Learn sessions, Techs Today cross-institutional networking events and the Technicians' Conference on 1 July 2026. At the Conference, Steering Group Members would be invited to participate in an 'Open Book' session, where they could share their career journeys and any advice with attendees. It was agreed that NA would circulate the schedule of events planned for the year with Members. **(Action: NA)**

RP said that he was keen to engage more Maintenance technicians with Techs Today events. It was proposed that an approach could be made to Amelia Kowalewska (the lead organiser, based at the Francis Crick Institute) on holding a Techs Today session with a relevant theme. Internally, it was suggested that the Maintenance team could be featured in the *Technicians' Network Newsletter*, that a themed lunchtime event could be arranged or that a session could be incorporated at Technicians' Conference. **(Action: NA, AHR, RP and AW)**

7. Enhancing Research Culture: Technician Secondment 2026 (AHR)

Following the success of the Technician Secondment last academic year with Aneesha Bhumber, AHR said that she had submitted a bid for Enhancing Research Culture funding to facilitate another secondment opportunity for a technician. The placement would involve working part time (0.4 FTE) for six months with Learning and Talent to define and deliver a project to support the careers of technical staff at Imperial and/or enhance the academic environment for this group of staff. AHR had also requested a small non-staff budget to support delivery of the project. If successful, recruitment would take place in November/December from Imperial's internal pool of technicians, with the secondment period running between January and July 2026. An update would be provided at the next meeting.

8. Ignite Programme for Mid-Career Technicians (AHR)

AHR told the Steering Group that five places were available for Imperial staff on the Ignite Programme for Mid-Career Technicians. This programme had been developed by the Institute of Cancer Research, with partners at King's College London, UCL and the Francis Crick Institute. Imperial had participated on a pilot basis for the first two cohorts (with two learners in each) but

had become a full partner as of this academic year. The course, funded by Wellcome, involved a commitment of four days over five months, between January and June 2026, with one date to be hosted by Imperial. It was geared at staff working in a role at grade 3a or 3b. The sessions were themed around Influencing from Within, Being Your Best Self, and Training the Technical Trainer. A laboratory visit scheme was also available to participants. AHR had received very positive feedback from staff in the two pilot groups. Applications were open until 14 November and Steering Group Members were encouraged to promote the course in their areas.

AHR also shared that Imperial would be opening applications imminently for IgnitePlus, Ignite's 'big sister' programme, aimed at facility managers and senior service-oriented technical professionals in Life Sciences and Healthcare Research. The target group at Imperial was staff in level 4 technical roles. Imperial had five places and there was a commitment of five dates. The programme included sessions on Project Management, Business Risk Management, building a Business Case, Applying for Grant Funding, Delivering a Successful Research Service and Strategic Thinking. AH asked whether a document summarising the different development programmes available to technicians could be created. The Chair also asked whether there was any flexibility for senior technicians in the Faculty of Engineering to participate, and AHR said she would check with the organisers. **(Action: AHR)**

9. Driving up award nominations (TV & All)

A short discussion was held about how to drive up award nominations. It was agreed that an additional Steering Group meeting would be convened later in the Autumn Term to discuss this agenda item in detail. **(Action: AHR and NA)**

10. Any Other Business, (TV)

Allison Hunter's Retirement

The Chair formally thanked AH for her exceptional contribution to the Technicians' Network and the Steering Group and wished her well for her retirement. It was agreed that a farewell event for Allison would be arranged in December.

Craft Apprenticeship - Maintenance

RP mentioned that Maintenance had successfully retained one of its completing apprentices and would be recruiting two more to start early in 2026. This led to a general discussion on technical apprenticeships across Imperial and engaging more departments with the laboratory-based scheme. SS felt there was appetite to revisit participation within the Faculty of Medicine, and AH suggested that AHR should pick this up with her successor in Life Sciences. Life Sciences was expanding its programmes, and there would be a need for more teaching technicians, and possibly for apprentices. It was agreed that AHR and NA would organise a talk on the Laboratory Technician Apprenticeship Scheme during National Apprenticeships Week 2026, as they did last year, to raise awareness of the programme and encourage participation. **(Action: AHR and NA)**

Date of next meeting: 8 December 2025