

Technician Commitment Steering Group

Wednesday 11 October 2023

10.00 – 11.00

Meeting Room 2 (Sher-05-513), 5th Floor Sherfield Building, South Kensington Campus

Minutes

Meeting #20

Attendees

Present:

Tim Venables	Institutional Lead for the Technician Commitment (Chair, TV)
Teri Barham	People & Organisational Development Consultant (TB)
Naweeda Ahmad	People & Organisational Development Coordinator, POD (NA) <i>Minutes</i>
Rakesh Patel	Head of Maintenance, Estates (RP)
Kenneth Keating	Technical Operations Manager, Bioengineering
Angela Williams	Learning and Development Officer, Estates (AW)
Allison Hunter	Technical Operations Manager, Life Sciences (AH)
Daniela Bultoc	Senior OD Consultant, POD (DB)

Apologies:

Paul Brown	Mechanical Workshop Instrumentation Manager, Physics (PB)
Russell Stracey	RSM Workshop Supervisor, Materials (RS)
Dr Sharron Stubbs	Senior Laboratory Manager, Infectious Disease (SS)
Joel Abrahams	Biological Research Officer, Surgery & Cancer (JA)
Ellen Pengelley	Technical Operations Manager, Bioengineering (EP)

Agreed Actions

- Approach Heads of Department about promoting the acknowledgement of technical staff in research publications in their areas (TB/TV)
- Find a new date for the White City tours (NA)
- Put together key themes of what to discuss in the focus groups (TB/TV)
- Organise Departmental focus groups and use mentimeter as a data collection element (All)
- Recommend a host to TB for the Technicians Today event on 14 December (KK)
- Contact Amelia to ask for a broader topic so presentations are made in groups not as individuals (TB)
- Forward the Technicians Today briefing email to TB (TV)

Minutes

1. Welcome and apologies (TV)

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Paul Brown, Russell Stracey and Sharron Stubbs.

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. It was noted that actions from the last meeting were not fully completed. Any actions that were assigned to Ailish will now be given to Teri. **(Action: TB)**

3. Update on Technicians' Festival (July 2023) (NA)

The Festival was held 10 to 14 July. We organised a 1-day conference in Scale Space and 7 workshops across the week, held online or in person. We had 80 registrations for the conference, including colleagues from UCL, the MRC London Institute of Medical Sciences and the University of Westminster, as well as technicians from nearly 20 departments within Imperial. We also welcomed as delegates a group of T-level students from a local secondary school, providing them with an opportunity to understand more about technical careers within Higher Education.

In addition, the funding supported three externally facilitated career development workshops; How to have an impactful career; How to craft your career story; and Networking skills for Technicians. We also had two ARC sessions; one for managers and one for non-managers, a sustainable science workshop and the Introduction to the STAR framework session. Total of 7 workshops.

Registrations and attendance

Members were informed of the registrations and attendance received for each aspect of the Festival.

Conference /Workshop	# of registrations received
Conference at Scale Space	80/80 (69 attended)
How to... craft your career story	4/12
How to... have an impactful career conversations	5/12
Networking for Success	4/12
PRDP (ARC) briefing session for Technical Managers	7 (open session)
Star Programme	4/60
PRDP (ARC) briefing session for Technicians (Staff, non-managers)	6 (open session)
Sustainable Science & Green Laboratories session	15/15

Feedback from attendees

All funded sessions rated high or very high by all respondents in terms of usefulness, likelihood you will apply what you have learnt and facilitation. Some negative feedback was also shared. Overall respondents felt the conference should have focused on career paths or skills to develop to advance job roles, celebrating technicians' accomplishments or their work.

Suggestions for future Technicians' Network events

- Confidence booster sessions
- Career path-focused talks
- Thematic discussion and lab visits
- Technicians contributions to College
- Possibly hold in May or June
- Raising ideas of issues currently present in the workplace and trying to get solutions together, similar to this year's event just more specific to the areas of workplace of different departments etc.
- Grant application, speaking with PIs and policymakers, getting recognised in publications.

Members discussed the feedback received and felt that some of the sessions we organised out of the conference could have dealt with the issues that arose from the conference feedback. We could have them earlier and focus on specific areas of interest. It would be useful to have the journey of the apprentice and technicians role at the next conference.

It was suggested to collate key themes to discuss in Departmental focus groups in November with an aim to find out what each Members' teams need and identify the wider community needs using mentimeter as a data collection tool. **(Action: TB/ALL)**

4. Update on the Technicians' Exhibition Action (TB/NA)

Members were informed TB and NA attended a meeting with Anne, Miguel and Richard from the artworks group. Anne, Miguel and Richard are working on the exhibition and want to combine it with the Technicians Today event. However, they can't do 14 December, and would like to move the event to 13 December in CAGB, South Kensington campus.

Members were asked for advice if the events should be combined or kept separate. It was decided that both events should be kept separate as the Technicians Today event is an opportunity to broaden purpose of existing activity and the Exhibition can take place on the 13th in isolation.

5. Technicians Today December event and identifying a host (TB/NA)

It was noted the events need to have a broader wording to allow for all technicians not just contract research technicians to be involved. As this is a UCL, Kings and Imperial event with the Crick, we can't be forced to have a narrow topic. The initial brief was to hold an event for the development of the technical community. Tim will forward this email to Teri. Ken will recommend a host to Teri for the Technicians Today event on 14 December. Teri will contact Amelia to ask for a broader topic so presentations are made in groups not as individuals. **(Action: TV/KK/TB)**

6. Update on Resilient Leadership in Action (RLiA) Programme (DB)

The RLiA Programme was introduced to the Steering Group in October 2022. Members were reminded it is a flagship experiential leadership programme for academics, senior technical staff and researchers. It offered a hands-on leadership experience in three days which included six activities, team-work, buddies and open feedback and coaching sessions.

The Programme is supported by a framework called leading resilient excellence. All participants receive a profile to see how resilient they are; what their presence is and how they work with others, clarity in what they want to do next, making decisions at the right time and in the right way.

Daniela explained the Programme was very expensive and taxing and was made up of one Director, 6 coaches, 2 administrators and 36 participants, split between POD and PFDC. Applications from technical staff were prioritised and we had 5 Techs (one senior), 1 technical manager, and 1 lab manager on the course with the rest being lecturers and probationary lecturers.

The Programme evaluation asked 5 key questions. 96.6% found it useful, 96.8% know more about leadership than before, 95% said they learnt more and 98% said they will apply what they received from the coach. It was noted it's amazing and rare to have such high feedback.

It was noted the Programme will not run in 2024 as from a human resource it is quite taxing and this year there is no funding available. If we did want to run it next year DB will need to put in a bid. The cost is £12k including catering and materials. It was discussed if the Programme could be put forward to technicians as part of their development. If internal staff became involved as coaches it would bring costs down, but we need to have that willingness from people to be involved. Another option would be to ask for a cost per participant via Department but this hasn't been trialled by Daniela yet.

Other suggestions were if the Programme was subsidised, some free places could be allocated to participants. It was noted PFDC will send researchers to other universities who are hosting the Programme. We could work with external universities and sell some places. But it was felt participating in an event at another institution would impact the overall experience so for that reason alone it would better to host at Imperial. A 3-day leadership course costing £350 pp is relatively good. Members felt it would be good to offer this Programme to Departments at a split cost between each.

Daniela thanked everyone for supporting Teri and Naweeda in the work they do.

7. Agree an approach to award nominations in 2024 (All)

Due to time constraints this agenda item will be discussed in the next meeting.

8. Update from London and SE institutional Leads Group (Allison/Sharron)

Due to time constraints in the meeting it was agreed AH will forward a statement on this agenda item. Please see Appendix 1.

9. AOB (TV)

Research Funding Proposal

Members were asked for any final comments before the proposal will be submitted to Research Office - Funding Strategy (Elisa Clemente).

Technicians Network News

Members were asked if the newsletter should be published on a weekly basis. It was agreed to address this in the focus groups.

Duration of future meetings

It was agreed to extend the meeting time from one hour to 1.5 hours.

Next meeting:

Wednesday 21 February 2024, 14.00 – 15.30