



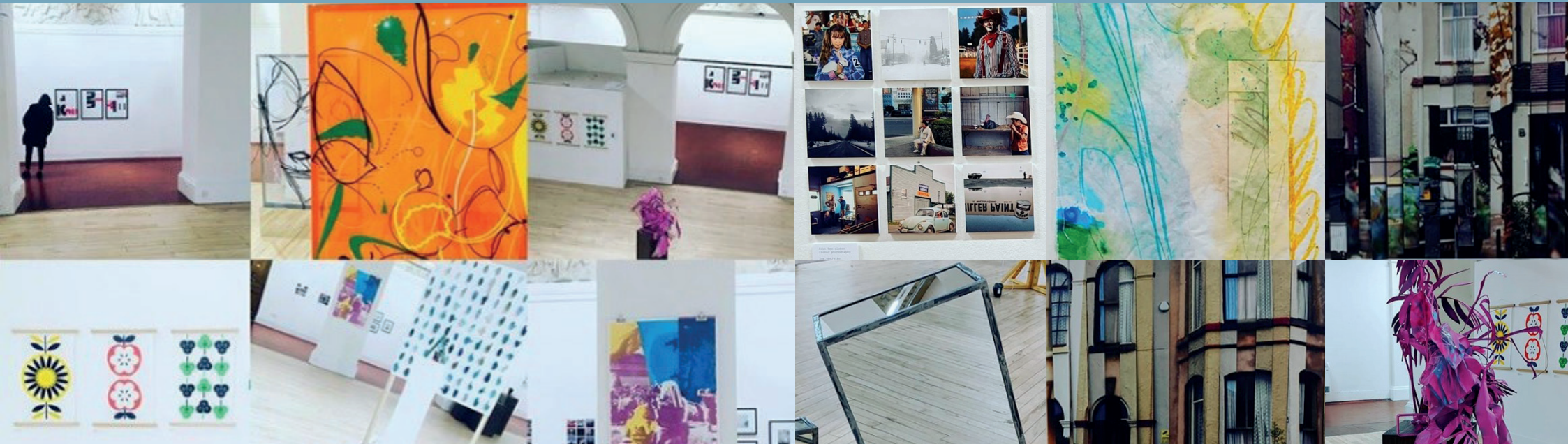
THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

Technicians Newsletter

February 2020

For technical staff working across science,
technology, engineering, IT & arts.

[More information](#)



The Technician Commitment

We are now in the second year of our two year Action Plan for the Technician Commitment to improve visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability of technical skills.



It is the joint effort of all on the Technician Steering Committee (TSC) to help in the delivery of this. The TSC has representation from across all colleges and campuses of the University and includes technicians and technical managers and members from the Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability, the Institute for Academic Development and Central HR: Learning and Development. We meet to discuss progress and develop initiatives that match our two year Action Plan, while responding to new national developments in the higher education technical community. Reports published in the past 12 months on mental health and equality, diversity and inclusion of technicians have raised important considerations for higher education across the UK and we aim to consider these in our next action plan - due in Autumn 2020.

We are making great progress in many areas. In December I was pleased to host an event at the QMRI with Prof Moira Whyte, that celebrated the Modern Apprentices and Foundation Apprentices within the University - engaging in apprenticeship schemes is meeting our technical sustainability goals. We have 5 technical Foundation Apprentices this year and are seeking more placements for this autumn. For technical staff Career Development there is now a [programme of courses](#) which has been developed by Joanna Fairweather in Learning & Development and Nicola Cuthbert in IAD. [Professional Registration](#) is a great opportunity for personal development - Val Gordon, our Technician Commitment Project Coordinator is a huge advocate of this. Following the launch of our Professional Registration Fund in September 2019, a cohort of 34 staff across the University are working towards Professional Registration through the Science Council. For more news on Professional Registration watch this space. In this edition of the newsletter you will also read about the technician-led Arts Exhibition held at the Edinburgh College of Art in December - a great opportunity to recognise their contribution to the College of Art and to raise visibility too.

We continue to consider ways to improve recognition and visibility for technical staff across the university, raising awareness of opportunities on the dedicated technician [website](#) and on [twitter](#). We welcome any suggestions you may have.

- Natalie Homer, Chair of the Technician Steering Committee

Modern Apprentice and Foundation Apprentice Celebration Event, Thu 12th December, QMRI

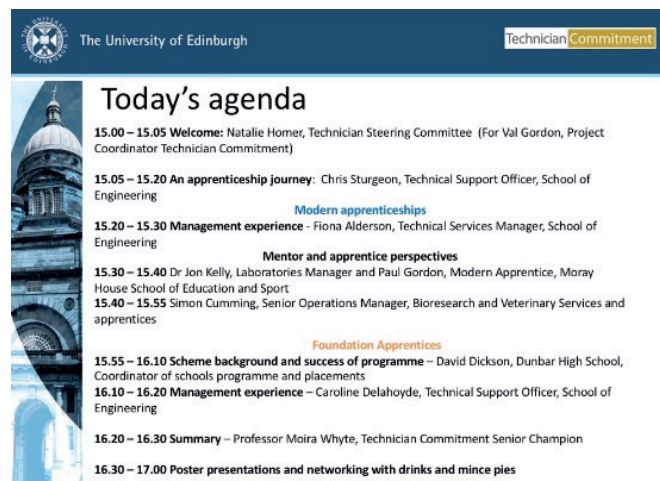
One of the four pillars of the Technician Commitment is sustainability.
Engaging in the University's apprentice programmes is one route
to sustaining technical skills at the University.

On the afternoon of Thursday 12th December we held a 'Modern Apprentice and Foundation Apprentice Celebration' in the Wellcome Auditorium, QMRI. Organised by Val Gordon, Project Coordinator for the Technician Commitment, the event included a programme of talks from mentors, apprentices and coordinators, highlighting the benefits of the programmes to the apprentices, technical managers and to the University. Apprentices were invited to create posters, which were viewed in a poster session with mince pies and drinks. Prof Moira Whyte, the Senior Sponsor of the Technician Commitment, presented apprentices with poster prizes and closed the event encouraging staff across the University to consider apprenticeship schemes for continuation of technical skills and expertise within the University.

Could your department benefit from apprentices? More information about this year's Modern Apprentice Programme can be found here. Register interest by 21st February 2020. Please contact Jenni Dixon at YouthTalent@ed.ac.uk if you want to find out more or think your team could host a Foundation Apprentice placement from August 2020.



L-r Simon Cumming (BVS), David Dickson (East Lothian Schools), Paul Gordon (MA), Dr Jon Kelly (School of Education and Sport), Chris Sturgeon (School of Engineering), Prof Moira Whyte, Fiona Alderson (school of engineering), Jordan Gray (FA), Liam Buchanan (FA)



Poster prize winners, awarded by
- Prof Moira Whyte

Combine: A Technicians Exhibition

Between the 3rd and 11th December a group of technicians at the Edinburgh College of Art held an exhibition of their art work within the impressive surroundings of the Sculpture Court.



The exhibition was organised by ECA technician Erin Colquhoun as a chance to showcase their art in one place for the week.

"It allowed them to show our commitment as a team and also in our own art background and a chance to talk to and meet other Technicians after working so hard all year."

- Erin Colquhoun

The opening night was a great success with many staff and students attending and provided anew opportunity to meet other technicians within ECA.

Artists taking part were:

Trix Archibald, Paul Charlton, Colm Clark,
Erin Colquhoun, Uist Corrigan,
Malcolm Cruickshank, Rachel Collie,
William Dixon, Eiko Emersleben
Karin Eremia, Alex Hall, Gen Harrison,
John McGregor, Joseph McShane,
Fiona Moon, Gregor Morrison,
Charlotte Pascoe, Lauren Puckett,
Alan Ramsey, Hannah Scott,
Derek Smith, Joan Stack, Gosia Walton



MRC I'm a Scientist 2019

In 2019 Shonna Johnston (@SMJohnston27), QMRI Flow Cytometry Facility Manager and Technician Steering Committee member, took part in the I'm a Scientist MRC Festival Zone.



I'm a Scientist MRC Festival Zone

Is an online competition giving school students the chance to connect with researchers and technical experts. The students challenged competitors in fast-paced live chats, asking anything they wanted, then voted for their favourite person to win a prize of £500 towards a public engagement activity of our choice.

Shonna wrote about her experience for the MRC Life newsletter and a version also appears on the [Technician blog site](#).

- Shonna Johnson

Feeling Inspired?

The MRC are looking for scientists to take part in the 2020 MRC Medical Research Zone and they are particularly keen to attract more applications from technical staff. Closing date is 3rd February. Good luck and please let us know if you apply techcom@ed.ac.uk.

Inspire the next generation of scientists



Medical
Research
Council

Medical
Research
Zone

I'm a
Scientist
Get me OUT of here

Put your public engagement skills to the test by taking part in the 2020 MRC Medical Research Zone, based on the *I'm a Scientist* platform. We are particularly keen to attract more applications from technical staff, like Shonna, to give students interested in science a taster of the wide range of potential scientific career options.

- Are you available 2-27 March?
- Keen to develop your communication skills?
- In a researcher or technical role based at an MRC-funded unit, centre or institute, or MRC grant holder?

Participants will be in with the chance of winning £500 to put towards a public engagement activity of their choice.

Apply by 3 February 2020. Find out more at: mrc.ukri.org/engage



Five to Follow

Twitter is a great way to keep up to date and to network with your colleagues across the UK technician community. Assuming you are already following us ([@UoETechnicians](#)) then here are our recommended 'five to follow':

1. Kelly Vere [@kellyvere](#) Technician at Nottingham University, mastermind of Technician Commitment and all round good egg
2. Valerie Gordon [@ValGordon7](#) Technician at Edinburgh University, member of the Technician Steering Committee and instrumental in getting the University to sign up to the Technician Commitment
3. University of Glasgow Technicians [@UofGTechnicians](#) Setting the standards for professional scientists & technicians through professional registration
4. Technically Speaking [@UoL_technicians](#) University of Leeds technician newsletter but also lots of good general chat
5. HEaTED [@HEaTEDtechs](#) Standing for Higher Education and Technician's Educational Development it is a source of CPD and networking opportunities University of Edinburgh is a member

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: A Technician Lens

This technician-focused EDI report was launched at the
STEMM-CHANGE annual conference in November.



Initiatives to advance equality, diversity and inclusion in higher education have focused on the academic and research community. It is vital to appreciate that EDI challenges do not just apply to these staff groups. The expansion of the Athena Swan Charter to include professional and support staff has ignited a greater interest in the equality, diversity and inclusion within these groups. It is arguable that the issues are often more serious in these communities, which include technicians, where EDI practices are often not as advanced.

This report addressed EDI challenges facing technicians, interesting findings were:

- technical colleagues often unaware of the EDI challenges they faced within their own community and unfamiliar with initiatives such as the Athena Swan
- a lack of inclusion of technical staff representation on institutional EDI committees
- a need to increase diversity in technical roles
- a need for all technicians to receive EDI training (see [here](#) for a list of UoE EDI on-line courses)

Sarah McCafferty attended the STEMM-CHANGE conference and the launch event of the report and you can read about her experience on the technicians [blog page](#).

A link to full [report](#).

Career Development Support for Technicians

Bookings are now open for the Career Development Programme for Technicians.

The programme is open to all technicians at the University, and made up of stand-alone development options, designed in such a way that you can decide which parts you want to attend, based on your own individual career goals. You are not required to attend the whole programme, although you can, but are encouraged to identify the area's most relevant to your career development plans.

Take Charge of Your Career

A 2hr session providing an overview of the new technicians career development programme, including tools and opportunities available from within the University and beyond.

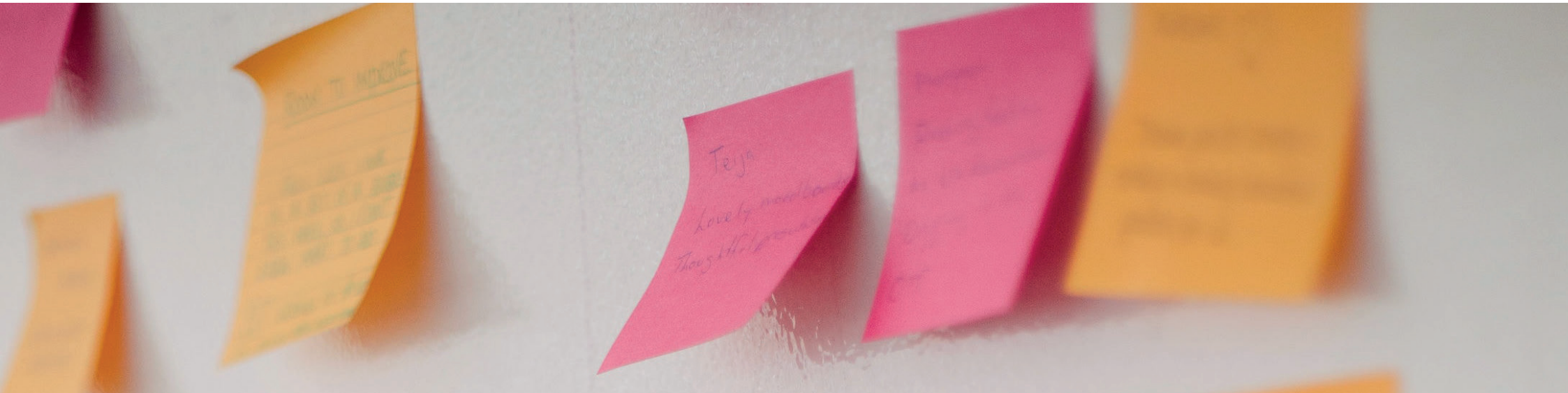
Taking Steps to Plan Your Career

A 1-day workshop to help you understand and present the skills, knowledge and experiences you have to offer to support you develop in your career.

Career Insights

1hr discussions with speakers and other technicians to allow you to explore the different career paths available. These workshops will be facilitated by a range of subject specialists and facilitators.

For more information and how to book visit [here](#).



Interested in speaking to others about your career?

Platform One is the university's digital community; an online platform connecting students, staff and alumni in a single location and share advice, knowledge and experiences. You can use the platform to connect with colleagues around the university to hear more about their career stories and to get advice or suggestions about your own career.

Visit their website [here](#).

Update on Professional Registration Fund

In September 2019 we launched a fund to support technicians at the University of Edinburgh focus on their professional standards through funding the first year of professional registration with a professional body. The fund closed on the 1st November and we received 37 applications, all were successful at meeting the requirements of the brief.

Two upcoming events have been organized to help technicians plan and start writing their professional registration submission. Those who did not apply for the fund are still welcome.

Writing Space

Monday 13th January 2020; 11am – 1pm; Wiederlight Room, Queen's Medical Research Institute, EH16 4TJ

The BioQuarter Technicians Committee arranged a writing space to help technicians prepare their professional registration reports with support from UoE Technical Staff who have already achieved their registration (both RSci and CSci). The event was organised by Shonna Johnston, QMRI Flow Cytometry & Cell Sorting Facility Manager (smaccall@ed.ac.uk). Watch out for similar events coming soon.

Professional Registration Workshop

Tuesday 3rd March 2020; 1pm – 4pm; B.09 IAD (1 Morgan Lane)

A representative from The Science Council will be providing an overview of the professional registration application and assessment process and be available to answer any of your questions.

To book your place, apply through this [MyEd link](#).

Opportunities

Royal Society of Chemistry – Technicians Skills Development Grant

A new opportunity for technicians who are members of the RSC.

An opportunity to receive up to £7k to support short to mid-term visits to organisations here or overseas to develop skills to support career progression.

The first round is open now and closes on 22nd March 2020 and will be open three times during this initial pilot phase.

For more [information](#).

Go Abroad

Not a Chemist but would still like to train abroad? The University Go-Abroad scheme is open to technicians too. More information on the application process and where you can go [here](#).

NTDC Photo Competition

Organised by the National Technician Development Centre, with a closing date of 9th February 2020 with a £150 prize.

“Submit a high-resolution photograph of you and your work – this can be anything you are responsible for making or maintaining in your workplace. Let us know who you are, what you do, and why your role is vital to your institution”

For more [information](#).

We are also looking for pictures of technicians and the work you do so please also send your pictures to TechCom@ed.ac.uk



Technical Services Solar Tracker Tester (AKA “The Scorpion”)

Our Engineering School’s Technical Team were given a general brief, from the course organisers, to develop a testing system for our 1st year student’s Engineering Design 1 projects (current student project is to design and build a small solar tracking and energy storage system).



Working collectively, across the disciplines, a small group of our Technicians carried out experiments (on suitable light sources), designed and manufactured the mechanical assemblies, the electrical & electronic signal conditioning & controls and developed software to produce a working system.

The LabVIEW & Arduino based system controls the sequence of lights, while also controlling the rotation of the project on a turn-table (to approximate the path of the Sun). The system was used, by the students, to demonstrate the mechanical Sun tracking operation, of their project, while also being able to measure the system power (from the solar-cells, consumed by their tracker control system and remaining power to charge the battery pack).

- Our technician team Jamie Graham, Calum Melrose, Richard Scott and Doug Halley (taking the photograph)

Awards

There are a number of awards that recognise the role of technical staff in delivering excellence.

Times Higher Education Awards 2019: Technician of the Year

For the first time the Times Higher Education Awards had a category for technicians. The inaugural winner was Dr Barbara Kunz from the Open University.

“Theoretical and practical expertise, and exceptional outreach activities, make Barbara a truly inspiring technician.”

- The judges said

Congratulations to Barbara, you can find out more about her work performing [geochemical analysis](#).

There are a number of awards that recognise the role of technical staff in delivering excellence. A list of some possible awards are on the [technician web page](#).

Why not apply or nominate a colleague?

Technician Stories

We are on the look-out for technician stories. These will be used for a variety of purposes such as the annual brochure and future advertisements. So if you have an interesting story to tell about your work or your career please get in touch. We are particularly interested in getting interesting pictures. If you can help please email TechCom@ed.ac.uk

Communications

Our technical community is over a thousand strong and based over many campuses. Getting an accurate list of technicians has been quite a challenge! Everybody on the UoE technician list is receiving this newsletter. If you have received it via a different route, such as from a colleague, and you want to be included on the distribution list please email: TechCom@ed.ac.uk

