

National Conference for Science Technicians 2024

Wednesday 4 September 2024, 10am–4.30pm

Institute of Physics; online

The Royal Society of Chemistry and the Institute of Physics invite you to a one-day conference for technicians working in all sectors, focusing on **visibility**.

As supporters of the Technician Commitment, this professional body event will bring together technical staff from across chemical science and physics to hear from other technicians, have the opportunity to attend talks from training providers and technical staff, and learn more about further support for technicians from professional bodies and organisations.

The programme for the conference is as follows:

09:30 Registration and networking

10:00 Opening remarks

10:30 Recognising the Role of Technical Staff in Health and Safety, MI Talent

Ed Bowerman, MI Talent

This interactive workshop will explore the findings and recommendations from the Midlands Innovation TALENT report '[Creating and Maintaining Safe Environments: The Role of Technicians in Health and Safety](#)'. Technicians will learn about best practice already taking place and how the recommendations can be taken forward in their own workplaces.

11:15 Parallel session 1

Upon registration, in-person attendees will choose their preferred workshop from the following:

- Engaging the next generation through outreach: A technician's perspective
Lee McMahon, Heriot-Watt University
In this breakout session, we will explore what makes an effective outreach session, emphasizing the critical role of technicians. Participants will discuss various feedback methods, techniques to gauge success, and best practices for running impactful outreach programs. Through interactive discussions and team activities, delegates will learn how to collaborate and continuously improve their outreach efforts.
- How to be successful at securing funding
Li Convey, UKRI; Lisa Alford, Tonbridge School; Lee Hibbett, University of Nottingham
This session will offer an overview of approaches for applying for and securing both external and internal funding, specifically from the perspective of technical staff in school and academic environments.
- Visibility of the School Technician Workforce – its relevance, perceived barriers and potential solutions
Caroline Butler, Scottish Borders Council
Exploring the evolving nature and remit of our roles, within STEM education, this session will look at the current professional landscape of the school science technician. Comparing the role with other technical sectors; academic and industrial, we will look to explore career structures and professional learning with the ultimate goal of defining our professions relevance and addressing the question "Is the current school technician model fit for purpose?"

This session will also be livestreamed to online attendees.

12:15 Lunch and networking. Exhibition stands from the RSC, IOP, NTDC and sponsors will be available to visit.

13:15 Technical Excellence Prize presentation

Please join us in the lecture theatre to award the 2024 Technical Excellence prize winners.

13:30 Parallel session 2

Upon registration, in-person attendees will choose their preferred workshop from the following:

- Engaging the next generation through outreach: A technician's perspective
Lee McMahon, Heriot-Watt University
In this breakout session, we will explore what makes an effective outreach session, emphasizing the critical role of technicians. Participants will discuss various feedback methods, techniques to gauge success, and best

practices for running impactful outreach programs. Through interactive discussions and team activities, delegates will learn how to collaborate and continuously improve their outreach efforts.

- Funding success stories

Richard Gammons, University of York; Mark Withers, Kings College London; Ghislaine Duncan, Dumfries and Galloway Council; Rebecca Dale, Dumfries and Galloway Council

In this session, members of the technical community will share their personal experiences of applying for and securing funding, along with the projects and successes they have realised as a result.

- Scientific communication skills – presenting your science

Steve Cross

Presenting your science - join Steve Cross for a workshop about standing up and talking about your work.

Whether it's for colleagues, supporters or a hiring panel we'll work together on becoming better public speakers, including honing our messages and grabbing our audience's attention. Steve has trained hundreds of people to present, and given even more of his own talks, so you can be sure he knows what he's talking about.

This session will also be livestreamed to online attendees.

14:30 Coffee and networking break to meet with colleagues and discuss the previous session.

15:00 How to be a famous slightly more high-profile scientist

Steve Cross

Steve Cross helps scientists (science technicians are scientists after all) build their public profile and create fun events and content about their work and knowledge. Join him for 45 minutes of entertaining stories with tips and tricks stolen from people like you to help you become louder and more visible in the workplace and beyond.

15:45 Technicians in equality, diversity and inclusion

Alanna Downing, Enable Nuclear; Shanice Dunk, IOP; Jane Smith, IOP

16:30 Closing remarks.

Following the close of the main conference programme, in-person delegates are invited to stay and network with refreshments.

Speaker list

Ed Bowerman, MI TALENT Technical Training Manager and ITSS Knowledge Exchange Placement Programme Lead

Ed is a Technical Training Manager for the Midlands Innovation TALENT project, which seeks to raise the status and opportunities for technicians in higher education and research. Ed is also part of the Institute for Technical Skills and Strategy team with a particular on technical placements and developing project management skills for technical staff. He started a 'Learning by Doing' series that centres around hands-on activities to maximise engagement of technicians. Ed is part of a team investigating the role of technicians in health and safety. Ed previously worked as a technician, engineer and technical manager at Rolls-Royce Civil Aerospace.

Lee McMahon, Senior Laboratory Technician at Heriot-Watt University

I am currently the Senior Laboratory Technician within the chemistry department at Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh. Within this diverse role I am responsible for the smooth running of our undergraduate and postgraduate teaching laboratories, Maintenance and operation of all analytical equipment and Co-coordinator of all outreach initiatives within the department. I am also a PhD researcher in Chemical education focusing my research around the impact of outreach on student learning within the chemical sciences across Scotland.

Dr Li Convey, Senior Portfolio Manager, Research Infrastructure, EPSRC, UKRI

Li Convey is a Senior Portfolio Manager in Research Infrastructure Theme at EPSRC, UKRI. She has an oversight of the equipment portfolio in EPSRC, including core equipment and strategic infrastructure opportunities. She also leads on the team priority on People and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Li received a PhD in Electrical and Electronic Engineering and joined EPSRC in 2020 where she held a role in the EDI and People team prior to joining the Research Infrastructure theme.

Lisa Alford, Science Coordinator and Senior Chemistry Technician at Tonbridge School

Lisa Alford, with a Diploma in Higher Education in Chemistry and as a Registered Science Technician and STEM Ambassador, she has over 15 years at Tonbridge School. Starting as a chemistry technician, she advanced to senior technician and now serves as Science Coordinator. She has led significant initiatives like the Science Snippets: 4 minutes to win it! competition, encouraging students to communicate scientific concepts effectively, and the Science Technician Convention, fostering collaboration among technicians. Under her leadership, Tonbridge School became the first to earn the Employer Champion title from the Science Council, highlighting her dedication to STEM education and leadership skills.

Lee Hibbett, Technical Manager within the School of Pharmacy at the University of Nottingham

I have been a technician working at the UoN for over 32 years working in many different types of research labs. In that time sustainability has not really been on the radar, so I'm happy to see that in the last few years there has been a big drive in this field. I have always been passionate about sustainability and 4 years ago, I set up the Technical Sustainability Working Group to work with UoN sustainability, to bridge the gap between labs and estates.

Caroline Butler RSciTech, Lead Science Technician at Scottish Borders Council

Caroline has been a school science technician for seventeen years covering all three science at all levels across the Scottish Curriculum. Currently leading a service of technicians across nine high schools, she is passionate about the role that a school technician plays in the delivery of excellence within STEM and the beneficial impacts that an effective science technician service can bring to education. She is an active member of the Scottish Technicians Advisory Council, Association of Science Education National Science Technician and Scotland groups and has also consulted on the development of a National Technical Leadership course.

Dr Richard Gammons, Technical Team Leader at the Green Chemistry Centre of Excellence at the University of York

Specialises in analytical chemistry, single crystal XRD and supports the taught Masters cohort of students in Green Chemistry. Co-leads the GCCE Sustainability team and has professional Registration (RSciTech) awarded by the Royal Society of Chemistry.

Mark Withers, Senior Purchasing Technician at the University of York

Mark studied Chemistry at the University of York, achieving a MChem in Chemistry in 2009. From there he worked in a number of secondary schools as teaching support and then as a lab technician.

He started working at KCL in 2017 as Laboratory and Stores Technician in the Chemistry Department, and currently works as the Senior Purchasing Technician, managing the Stores and providing purchasing support for small and large purchases. He also supports the KCL Technical Network as a Campus Champion.

Ghislaine Duncan, school technician coordinator at Dumfries and Galloway Council

I have worked as a Science Technician in education for over 15 years now, the last 6 of which has been in a leadership role for my local authority supporting and promoting the technician service in both Science and Technical departments. I am passionate about raising the profile of technicians and represent Dumfries and Galloway on the Scottish Technicians Advisory Council (STAC) in partnership with SSERC.

Steve Cross, Science Showoff

Steve is a science communicator, trainer and comedian, hosting events around the world where real scientists tell jokes about their work in front of real comedy audiences. His clients include universities, corporations, government departments, museums and the occasional cathedral. Find him at drstevecross.com or hear him on the World's Only Science Podcast every week.

Alanna Downing, Enable Nuclear Co-Founder

Alanna is a passionate advocate for Disabled and/or Neurodivergent workers and has been working to support these staff within different working groups and speaking publicly about the need for inclusivity for the past 6 years. Most recently, Alanna has co-founded a Nuclear industry-wide network for collaboration between company employee resource groups "Enable Nuclear" and intends to build this network to help as many different companies as possible. In her free time, she volunteers as an Accessibility Champion for UK Tetris e-sports competitions as well as being a modern Tetris Commentator and Streamer.

Shanice Dunk, Equality Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Officer at the Institute of Physics

I am the Equality Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Officer at the Institute of Physics (IOP). My focus has been managing the Physics Inclusion Award project which is the IOP's new EDI award scheme for university physics departments based in UK and Ireland. I worked in collaboration with the physics community to develop the Physics Inclusion Award criteria, ran a pilot scheme with 11 university physics departments to test the criteria and the launch of the criteria in April 2024. I am also the co-chair of the IOP's internal Multi-Cultural Staff Network where we have brave spaces and safe spaces to discuss various topics that effect our communities.

Jane Smith, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Programme Manager at the Institute of Physics

I am the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Programme Manager at the Institute of Physics (IOP). I work closely with the IOP members, the physics community and STEM colleagues to deliver external facing IOP programmes. This includes the development of the new Physics Inclusion Award, reviewing Project Juno - the IOP's flagship gender equality award established in 2008, and managing the LGBT+ Physical Science Network. I also am a member of the inaugural Research England EDI Expert Advisory Group and a Trustee for Laamiga, a mentoring and coaching charity for women from minority ethnic and migrant and refugee backgrounds.

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