

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
- How to be successful at securing funding
Tony Chapman, UKRI; Lisa Alford, Tonbridge School; Lee Hibbett, University of Nottingham
- Visibility of the School Technician Workforce – its relevance, perceived barriers and potential solutions
Caroline Butler, Scottish Borders Council

This session will also be livestreamed to online attendees.

12:15 Lunch and networking. Exhibition stands from the RSC, IOP, Science Council 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
- Funding success stories
Richard Gammons, University of York; Mark Withers, Kings College London; Gordon Neill; Ghislane Duncan
- Scientific communication skills
Speaker TBC

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, AWE; 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Tony Chapman, Senior Portfolio Manager at EPSRC

Tony Chapman has worked at EPSRC for over 12 years, and is now a Senior Portfolio Manager at EPSRC within the Research Infrastructure team. He currently works on EPSRC submissions to the UKRI Infrastructure Fund and has previously been involved in funding schemes such as Strategic Infrastructure and Core Equipment. He has specific responsibility within the Research Infrastructure theme for people and skills, and has a particular interest in promoting and supporting the Research Technical Professional (RTP) community and early career researchers.

Steve Cross

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 at AWE

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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