

Earlham Institute's Technicians' Action Plan

Date of Issue: 30/11/2023

AP	ACTION	ELEMENTS	RATIONALE	RESPONSIBILITY	KEY OUTPUTS/IMPACT	TIMEFRAME	THEME	ASBAP
1	Clarify career pathways for professional, technical and operational staff (PTO)	Create a career pathways document for PTO staff and regularly promote this information to ensure accessibility and transparency.	We know through staff surveys and consultation that lack of information about career pathways and professional development is a matter of concern to a wide range of staff.	Chief Operations Officer (COO) with support from Strategic HR Team	A clear document containing the relevant information is retrievable from the EI intranet, included at induction and promoted regularly.	September 2024	Career Development	AP19, AP22
2	Review training to ensure breadth of options available to develop professional, technical and operational staff	Encourage non-academic staff to attend conferences (to flag to PIs at e.g. appraisal); Include opportunities for international conferences. Find Flexible Talent Mobility Award (FTMA) opportunities at NRP; promote the opportunities in good time to allow people to apply. Look for and publicise suitable training courses (e.g. PRINCE2, PFQ, PMQ).	To improve development opportunities for professional, technical and operational staff. To build career-building confidence in non-research staff.	COO with support from Business Development and Innovation (BDI) team and EDI Manager	Budget available for conference attendance for non-research staff and opportunities publicised via email/Inside EI or EI-All. FTMA opportunities are promoted with sufficient time for staff to apply.	April 2024 September 2024 August 2025	Career Development	AP17
3	Encourage PTO staff to become involved with grant applications with the aim of being named as "Specialist", "Technician" or as "Researcher co-lead" (in line with UKRI guidance).	Publicise that potential applicants can attend the the grant discussion forum and the internal Sift process as observers to see what peer review looks like. Establish internal mentoring in grant-writing for technical staff. Encourage Group Leaders to involve PTO staff in grant submissions as a step towards reaching more senior roles and building their track record of achievements.	To improve career development opportunities for PTO staff, ensuring they are supported with access to the right skills training and support from senior management.	Institute Director with support from senior management and Group Leaders	PTO staff are involved in making grant applications, and are named on grants as "Specialist", "Technician" or as "Researcher co-lead".	Start in Q1 2024 and continue during life of plan	Career Development	AP22
4	Establish secondments and cross-institute mentoring	Provide opportunities for secondments (job relevant) and cross-institute mentoring; encourage take up of internal and external secondment opportunities (job-relevant).	To help technicians access exposure to as wide a range of relevant skills as possible to help raise aspirations and develop careers.	Group Leaders with support from COO	A log of cross training experiences is built up with managers becoming used to hosting secondments. A bank of technically-based mentors is established.	Start in Q1 2024 and continue during life of plan	Career Development	AP22, AP23
5	Review elements of annual appraisal	Check that all staff are on the appropriate appraisal form set for their job category to ensure they are receiving the most appropriate version of the annual appraisal. Ensure all staff are trained in the use of Researchfish.	Job categories have changed from time to time and it is possible some people have not been moved to the correct set of appraisal forms. Researchfish has become the core method of recording achievements and career events/progression so all staff must understand how to use it.	EDI Manager with Human Resource Manager and Head of Research Faculty Office	Feedback sought formally (e.g. focused survey or consultation group). Relevant changes made to the appraisal form/process. Transparent feedback to EI staff.	Start Q1 2024 and have any identified changes implemented in appraisal 2025 round	Career Development	AP11
6	Improve recognition of professional, technical and operational staff	Establish a clear, documented, pathway for professional registration for technical and support staff (which could be different for each strand within PTO). Ensure PTO staff are aware of the opportunities for professional registration and how this can progress their career. Ensure the information is on the EI intranet and regularly promoted/updated. Create and show timelines and case studies of the careers of PTO staff to encourage and inspire others. Celebrate 'a Day in the Life' of PTO staff and celebrate promotions and achievements, e.g. via EI All and Inside EI.	Sharing timelines and career/role stories will help inspire others in shaping their careers. Attendance at a professional registration introductory event and post-event survey results have demonstrated that there is interest at EI for applying for registration.	Technician Commitment (TC) Lead with support from IDEA Committee and Head of Communications	The professional standing of PTO staff is raised through professional registration. Awareness of the important contributions of PTO staff to the work of the Institute is raised. Awareness within the PTO staff groups of different opportunities for shaping their careers is raised.	Start in Q1 2024 and continue during life of plan	Recognition	AP12
7	Develop a robust process for PTO staff to be put forward for external and internal awards	Establish an internal team to mentor and review applications to EI awards. Increase the number of award nominations by raising awareness of initial opportunities (internal and external) and then awareness of successes (e.g. Papin, etc). Have a prompt as part of the appraisal process to encourage discussion and nomination for awards. Maintain the Technician Commitment section within the annual internal EI awards. Publish awards on the EI Intranet and IDEA Noticeboard every year. Review which teams nominate staff each year and establish a process of feedback to prompt those teams who do not regularly nominate, to do so, with the aim of achieving greater consistency across the Institute.	The likelihood of recognition will be improved by having a prompt within the appraisal process. Publishing award winners will help raise the profile and awareness of who wins external awards and why, to encourage future nominations.	COO with support from TC Lead, EDI Manager and Head of Communications	The profile of PTO staff is raised and more PTO staff are nominated for prizes/awards than in previous years.. Awareness is raised within the PTO community of the value of prizes/awards in supporting career advancement.	Start in Q1 2024 and continue during life of plan	Recognition	AP10

8	Clarify which staff are included under the work of the Technician Commitment	<p>Create a clear definition of the term 'technical staff' (i.e. those covered by the Commitment) to ensure better representation for those whose positions are not currently clear.</p> <p>Regular written and verbal reminders of who is covered by the TC during communications about our work.</p> <p>Complete an exercise in mapping roles to job categories, job categories to example career paths and to appraisal forms (see AP 5).</p>	Due to the name 'Technician Commitment' it is not always clear to staff whether they are included under the activities and remit of the work being carried out under the Plan.	TC Lead with support from EDI Manager	Clarity across the institute about the inclusivity of work under the Technician Commitment.	During Q1 2024	Recognition	
9	Raise the professional esteem of Technical staff	<p>Review and harmonise our policies for fair attribution with the aim of ensuring that all research projects are required to fairly attribute all contributions.</p> <p>Proactively tackle working culture whereby non-academic staff are not given professional credit for their work, contribution and expertise.</p> <p>Ensure all staff have Researchfish training so attribution can be fair.</p> <p>Review the membership of all committees annually to ensure PTO staff are represented where feasible/appropriate.</p>	<p>The work of the first two elements is designed to ensure that PTO staff who contribute to research projects with specialised skill sets are properly recognised and are attributed for their contributions along with research colleagues.</p> <p>While the Institute does have a positive work culture overall and this is promoted via our values and communications from top level, surveys show that within teams this can be variable. These actions aim to ensure greater consistency across all teams - EI's values are stated on its website, and these will be regularly promoted via our work on the Technician Commitment.</p> <p>PTO staff may not have the same opportunities as research colleagues to have a voice in the decision-making committees at EI and this action aims to improve that.</p>	<p>COO with the support of the TC Lead and the IDEA Committee</p> <p>Institute Director with the support of Group Leaders and TC Lead</p> <p>EDI Manager with support of Committee Chairs and COO (Responsible for Governance)</p>	<p>Staff report a consistently positive working culture.</p> <p>Staff can evidence attribution of their work on key projects.</p>	From Q1 2024 to end of Plan	Recognition	AP37
10	Clarify pay and grading policies	<p>Establish a system between HR and the EDI Manager for sharing and communicating anonymised data around the application of existing reward systems.</p> <p>Educate Line Managers and staff about the application of existing reward systems: i.e. promotion, pay awards and special bonuses.</p> <p>EDI Manager working with HR to collate data each January relating to the previous year's promotions, bonuses, regradings and responsibility allowance awards. Disaggregate by research and Professional, Technical and Operational (PTO) staff.</p> <p>Update trends annually for clarity on PTO progression and reward. To be discussed annually by the Strategic HR Committee, with agreed action plan if corrective action is needed to ensure fair and appropriate application to all staff at EI.</p>	<p>Surveys reveal a lack of clarity around pay awards, discretionary awards, responsibility allowance and promotions and feel there is a lack of transparency in how these are awarded. This work is designed to improve perceptions and establish more positive perceptions to build on in the future and to increase transparency.</p> <p>This action supports AP1 above.</p>	<p>EDI Manager with support of HR Manager and COO</p> <p>Strategic HR Committee, with high level reporting to the Employee Consultation Forum on trends and actions</p>	Greater transparency around definition of technical pay grades and improvement of staff perceptions of fairness and transparency in relation to pay awards and discretionary awards.	During first year of plan (2024)	Recognition	AP25
11	Explore options for greater sustainability of PTO roles	<p>Explore whether EI can host apprenticeships, T Levels, interns and placements.</p> <p>Explore marking National Apprenticeship Week and National Learning at Work Week.</p>	This work will help establish alternative routes of entry to the Institute and provide access and inspiration to young people who prefer to follow a formal apprenticeship.	COO with support, Advanced Training Team, HR Manager and Communications Team	EI regularly hosting young people following non-traditional routes.	From Q1 2024 to end of Plan	Sustainability	
12	Retain skills with formal succession planning and raise awareness of the process	<p>Create a written process of the existing annual succession planning exercise; promote this to ensure staff are aware that it takes place.</p> <p>Allocate guaranteed career development time in work hours to staff from all staff groups for career-related training without adding pressure to deliver.</p>	<p>When staff move on or retire there is a loss of cultural knowledge and professional expertise, additionally recruitment is an expensive process.</p> <p>To provide greater career interest for those in lower grades, succession planning would enable staff to develop a wider range of skills and protect the institute from difficulties when specialised staff move on.</p> <p>There is a need also to manage this within affordability constraints on any associated training costs, alongside required job-related training from within Group training budgets or central EDI funds (set aside to facilitate this plan).</p>	Group Leaders and Line Managers with support from COO and HR and Learning and Development Team	Greater skills and knowledge retention and greater scope for career development for PTO staff.	From Q1 2024 to end of Plan	Sustainability	
13	Develop opportunities to highlight PTO staff	<p>Establish a communications plan for events/opportunities/award nominations so that they can be promoted to all of EI in good time. Establish an EI Intranet page publicising the annual calendar of opportunities.</p> <p>Use EI All and Inside EI to promote events and opportunities for TC; include interviews with Technicians; use Twitter to promote and report Technician opportunities and success.</p> <p>Ensure PTO staff have a presence on the intranet/web pages for EI and encourage individuals to improve their website profiles.</p> <p>Encourage more laboratory tours to be provided at levels below Group Leader.</p> <p>Encourage staff to add EI to their LinkedIn profile to help network and connect with others.</p>	These elements are all aimed at raising awareness of the range and value of roles undertaken by the PTO staff group and also to inspire those developing their careers by seeing and understanding examples of work being done.	TC Lead and EDI Manager with support from Head of Communications	<p>Range of articles and verbal updates as well as greater social media presence of PTO staff group and their work.</p> <p>PTO staff developing their careers report satisfaction with range of inspiring information they see at EI (measured via survey/consultation work).</p>	From Q1 2024 to end of Plan	Visibility	AP21, AP24

14	Proactively promote careers and successes of PTO staff	<p>Allocate a week each year to promote careers within the TC cohort, including 'a day in the life of' and other insights.</p> <p>Include speakers on technical subjects in the Seminar Series and ISP meetings and invite other NRP institutes helping PTO staff to network.</p> <p>Hold NRP Technical/PTO Staff networking events and determine how other NRP staff have engaged with and benefitted from the TC.</p> <p>Open up future EI Open Days to other institutes for wider attendance (number restrictions for the building may mean we run dual events (i.e. on more than one day, to cater for different audiences and manage numbers attending).</p>	All elements of this action are designed to improve visibility, raise awareness of and encourage PTO careers at EI. The work also aims to give voice to the value of and illustrate the range of work carried out in support of the Institute's research.	TC Lead with support from Head of Communications, EDI Manager and Research Faculty Office	<p>Improved awareness of PTO roles across EI and the wider Research Park.</p> <p>Greater connection by PTO staff between institutes.</p> <p>Consultations show PTO staff are interested/inspired by range of speakers engaged.</p>	From Q1 2024 to end of Plan	Visibility	AP24
15	Improve internal search to help raise profiles/awareness	<p>Make intranet training a mandatory part of the induction process and promote this via the Communications Team, once established.</p> <p>Review, with other NRP Institutes, how the shared NBI intranet can be used to effectively find people, and their roles, easily.</p> <p>Design a logo for PTO staff and link it to the intranet page for inclusion at the bottom of staff emails.</p>	Many staff are not aware of how the intranet works and much important information is stored there, so raising understanding of the intranet will improve universal access to key information.	EDI Manager with support from IT Support and Head of Communications	Improved search facility is visible and staff can a) find colleagues easily when they need to connect and b) have easy access to key policies.	By end of 2025	Visibility	
16	Promote professional registration and encourage membership of other appropriate professional bodies and networks to help raise esteem of PTO staff at EI and in their sector	<p>Promote professional registration at least annually.</p> <p>Encourage membership of other appropriate bodies, e.g. Technical Managers Union, Institute of Leadership and Management.</p> <p>Support attendance at networking opportunities.</p> <p>Encourage attendance at events in Industry with those organisations with whom EI has business partnerships.</p>	To help establish greater professional regard for Technicians and improve career prospects for individuals.	TC Lead with support from EDI Manager	Increased level of professional registration and membership of professional bodies.	From start of 2024 and during the course of the Plan	Visibility	AP19
17	Develop a strategy for capturing as much activity as possible to evidence the impact of the actions in this plan	Look at capabilities of Researchfish, Miro and other apps/systems to determine how best to capture on-going activity across the institute and to track any changes brought about by application of the actions in this plan.	<p>The Steering Group will need to evidence impact as part of the review of this plan and the formulation of the next plan.</p> <p>This action will support the broader need to demonstrate impact and value of participation in the TC framework.</p>	TC Lead and EDI Manager with support from Research Faculty Office	The Institute will have a variety of means through which activity is trackable and impact can be demonstrated by data or other information.	Establish systems during Q1 2024 and use through life of plan	Visibility	