

HEaTED Regional Network Meeting Report – North West

Region: North West

Date: Wednesday 3rd October 2012

Venue: King's House Conference Centre, Manchester

Agenda:

- 9.00 – 9.15 Welcome and plans for the HEaTED Regional Network – Dr Arthur Nicholas, HEaTED North West Regional Network Co-ordinator
- 9.15 – 10.30 Professional Registration – *What's in it for me, and for my employer?*
Kevin Oxley (Departmental Manager; The University of Sheffield)
Julia Bostock (Technical Officer; Manchester Metropolitan University)
Ben Palmer (Research Technician; The University of Sheffield)
- 10.30 – 10.45 Tea & Coffee
- 10.45 – 11.30 HEaTED Update – Dr Rachel Crossley, HEaTED Programme Manager
- 11.30 – 12.30 Sharing initiatives for Technical Training & Development In-House
Paul Dixon, Head of Staff Training & Development, the University of Manchester
Followed by best practice discussions
- 12.30 – 1.30 Complimentary lunch, networking opportunities

Key discussion points from each agenda item:

1. Welcome and plans for the HEaTED Regional Network – Dr Arthur Nicholas, HEaTED North West Regional Network Co-ordinator

Arthur intends to develop the network in such a way that it optimises the return on investment (mainly time) for all of us. The theme of exploring and establishing ways in which we can pool our resources and optimise our activities to the mutual benefit of the network members will underpin all future ventures. He will look to identify opportunities & threats for the North West technical workforce, whilst exploiting our strengths as a regional network in working and cooperating together to effectively manage them. Specifically, Arthur feels we should look to utilise networking opportunities to benefit our technical staff workforce in promoting:

- Skills & knowledge
- Career opportunities
- Professional profile

2. Professional Registration – *What's in it for me, and for my employer?*

Kevin Oxley (Departmental Manager; The University of Sheffield) – Kevin gave a comprehensive overview of Professional Registration and the different awards that are offered by the Science Council and Engineering Council through their Licensed Bodies. Kevin also provided information on the Institute of Science & Technology as a key organization awarding RSCi and RSCiTech to Technical staff from all disciplines. Kevin's presentation can be found as Appendix 1.

Julia Bostock (Technical Officer; Manchester Metropolitan University) – Julia gave us an interesting and insightful summary of her professional journey, her experience in working towards / applying for RSciTech, and the reasons she then became an assessor for the ASE who are also licensed to award RSCi and RSCiTech. Julia's presentation can be found as Appendix 2.

Ben Palmer (Research Technician; The University of Sheffield) – Ben talked about his early-career experience of completing the IST CPD Award to support his own Personal and Professional Development, and how that ultimately led to him being awarded RSCiTech in July 2012. Ben's presentation can be found as Appendix 3.

3. 'How HEaTED is supporting Technicians, and our role in achieving professional registration', Dr. Rachel Crossley, HEaTED Programme Manager

Rachel presented an update on HEaTED's activity over the past year, and highlighted key areas of activity that directly supports members in achieving professional registration. She emphasised the need for HEaTED members to update their profile on the new website and on-line communities, and welcomed suggestions for the HEaTED national conference sessions on the 9th of January at the Science Learning Centre in York. HEaTED has become a valuable partner and vehicle in the technician's professional journey, and members will make the most of this relationship through taking up HEaTED services. Rachel's presentation is attached as appendix 4.

Rachel then asked the group to participate in the following discussions:

1. What do you want to see HEaTED delivering?
 - *A way of contacting and getting information from other technicians across the UK; sourcing other technicians who can offer specialist help*
RC comment: this is exactly what the online communities should be used for
 - *Courses at affordable prices or assistance in applying for funding*
RC comment: HEaTED sources courses at discounted rates for members. The Higher Education Academy will be presenting on a related topic at the HEaTED conference on 9th January 2013
 - *Management skills for technicians*
RC comment: we are in the process of developing a new 'Leadership and Management Skills for Technical staff' course which will run from January 2013
 - *Online resources such as COSHH, Biohazard Safety, Training Manuals and so on; plus online video resources*
RC comment: the resources that were held on the old VLE are currently being assessed and will be re-listed in the Resources area of the Online Communities soon
 - *Basic Skills courses e.g. centrifuge training and maintenance, pipette servicing, saw use, RO waste polisher*
 - *Network for Technical Managers*
RC comment: a future meeting can be tailored for technical managers
 - *Information on other bodies we might be interested in e.g. USHA, SCHOMS*
RC comment: we will look into producing a 'who's who' for our members
 - *More promotion of how members can run courses through HEaTED*
RC comment: this was featured in the Spring / Summer 2012 HEaTED Update, there is also information online here: <http://www.heated.ac.uk/heated-course-providers-form/>
2. Topics for next Regional Network Meeting?
 - *More discussion on Professional Registration including info on how to complete the registration form, and different options for registration for technicians*
RC comment: the guide that we have included as an appendix should help, as should the information on our Professional Registration web page here: <http://www.heated.ac.uk/professional-registration/>
 - *How to tackle Green Impact Initiatives (incl. Green / safe waste disposal)*
RC comment: will add to an agenda for future meetings, and look at new course or session at January Conference

3. Venue for next meeting?

- *University of Liverpool's central teaching laboratories has been offered for a meeting in late June / early July.*
HEaTED will follow up
- *Media City, Salford*
HEaTED will follow up for the Autumn 2013 meeting
- *Lancaster, Liverpool, Salford general suggestions*

4. Course suggestions?

- *How to tackle Green Impact Initiatives (incl. Green / safe waste disposal)*
RC comment: HEaTED to look at new course and / or session at January Conference
- *Train the Technical Trainer being delivered in the region*
(<http://www.heated.ac.uk/courses/train-the-technical-trainer-4/>)
RC comment: HEaTED will arrange for this course to be delivered this term or early next term.
- *Tissue culture for media staff; genotyping of cells and animals; screening for mycoplasma; sequencing / molecular biology software training*
RC comment: HEaTED to approach some member HEIs who already provide this training
- *Look at what courses / training Media City Salford can offer to the Arts / Creative / IT cohort*
RC comment: HEaTED to make contact with Media City and look into this request
- *Courses for Stores technicians e.g. chemicals / biohazard training, radiation, general health and safety*
RC comment: HEaTED already have many of these general courses, see the Health & Safety brochure and course listings here: <http://www.heated.ac.uk/our-courses/>
- *Working with the Environmental Sustainability Agenda*
RC comment: this will be a session at the January 2013 conference

4. **Sharing initiatives for Technical Training & Development in-house - Paul Dixon, Head of Staff Training & Development, The University of Manchester**

Paul gave an interesting introduction which covered the role of a 'modern day technician' and how this has changed significantly over recent years. He also discussed ways that The University of Manchester is tackling how to meet the needs of technical staff, including the links between them and HEaTED and the Staff Development Forum. Interestingly, Paul then translated his thoughts that for Professional Registration to succeed it requires national, regional and institutional support. On an institutional level, such as that being adopted at The University of Sheffield in partnership with the IST, the most important feature proposed is gaining support and motivation of senior decision makers. Paul's presentation is attached as Appendix 5.

The discussion then moved on to best practice discussions around sharing initiatives for in-house technical training and development. The discussions can be summarised as follows:

What's working well?

- Top down commitment i.e. senior management support
- External training budget ring-fenced for technical staff at some HEIs – this allows them to take advantage of HEaTED's discounted courses
- Technician's away days NB HEaTED have a new course which has recently been developed
- Online, annual, Performance & Development Reviews or even regular keep in touch meetings
- Personal Development Plans
- Centralised technical services

What is not working well?

- Need more training budgets ring-fenced for technical staff in many HEIs
- Relevant needs assessments need to be carried out and the outcomes supported
- The motivation of individuals to participate effectively in PDR process
- Technical managers have little or no control of Technical staff training budgets

- Appraisals/ Performance & Development Reviews are often not taken seriously by appraisees or senior Faculty/School management

What can we do to make things better?

- Raise awareness of the importance of Professional Registration in identifying highly skilled professional technical staff able to contribute to good outcomes for Research Excellence Framework 2014 and National Student Survey (NSS)
- Work together to promote linkage of Professional Registration to Appraisals/ Performance & Development Reviews
- Act to advocate that CPD and Professional Registration may demonstrate skills and personal attributes over and above those shown by the possession of a degree or other formal qualification
- Use HEaTED more effectively to support and drive professional development
- Use the HEaTED online regional community as a market place for exchanging best practice; technical expertise and training

Discussion points to be incorporated into forthcoming meetings:

1. The Diamond Report and shared services initiatives in HEIs – best practice models
2. How HEIs are supporting staff, particularly technical teams, in their contributions to the Student Experience
3. The importance of CPD and Professional Registration in achieving and recording competencies plus managing a technical career progression
4. Sustainable development and the role of Technical staff in its management and delivery
5. Development of “self help” workshops focusing on real-time issues affecting technical practitioners and managers

Actions:

1. HEaTED to ask about Prof Reg and maternity policy – does this affect re-registration dates?

Response from the IST is as follows:

“Members on an extended career break may not be required to revalidate registration for up to three years as long as they continue to pay the re-registrant fee. The IST may also allow registrants in exceptional circumstances (for example as a result of long-term illness) to defer validation for up to three years.

Members wishing to defer validation for either of these reasons must fill in the form ‘Application for deferment of registration’

2. HEaTED will use the comments and suggestions from the discussion to guide development of new courses, future meetings, and online community content.
3. Plan for the next HEaTED NW network meeting to be held in June / July 2013
4. All NW members have been invited to join the General and NW Online Community group (see: <http://www.nationalstemcentre.org.uk/community/groups/96/heated-north-west>) - please accept this invitation and encourage discussion amongst colleagues
5. Please update your member profiles on the HEaTED website so that we can tailor our communications to you

Appendices:

- All presentations / slides are attached as Appendices 1-5 in the Online Community group
- A Quick Guide to Professional Registration for HEaTED Members is enclosed as Appendix 6