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*Delivering Excellence & Innovation in a Changing Technical Landscape*

# iST CONFERENCE 2023 KEYNOTES

London South Bank University  
Wednesday 13th September

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**Professor David Phoenix, OBE FRSC**

*Keynote Title: Post 16 Technical education and the need for sector differentiation (FE-HE technical universities)*

Policy makers often refer to England’s ‘skills system’ but this is a misnomer. A system is a set of things working together whereas the funding and regulatory frameworks in English education sectors tend to generate silo-based working leading to inefficiency and lost opportunity. In addition, whilst more traditional routes for educational progression of 16- to 21-year-olds are well established we lack distinctive and specialist technical pathways

which align with the country’s lifelong learning needs, and which support those young learners that want alternative progression routes.

In this keynote, Professor David Phoenix will draw on lessons learnt from establishing LSBU Group to discuss the importance of creating sector differentiation, within the context of local post-16 education. He will emphasise the importance of offering learners a genuine and positive choice to follow technical pathways through secondary, further, and higher education into rewarding careers that meet the skill needs of the English economy.



**Dr Kelly Vere, MBE FIScT**

*Keynote Title: Transforming the Technical Profession: Shifting Narratives and Building a Positive Culture*

This talk explores the history of the technical profession in the UK, the challenges technicians have faced, and the emergence of a more positive culture for technical skills, roles, and careers. It discusses recent initiatives like the Technician Commitment and the TALENT programme that have transformed the perception and recognition of technical staff in universities and research institutions. The session will highlight the changing landscape and increased inclusivity within learned societies, professional bodies, and sector organisations. It will explore the future of the technical profession, and forthcoming initiatives that aim to continue advancing status and opportunities for technicians, fostering a supportive culture and environment that values, respects and invests in technical expertise.

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## Professor David Andrew Phoenix, OBE FRSC

Professor David Phoenix is the Vice-Chancellor of London South Bank University and CEO of the LSBU Group. In addition to being the Accountable Officer for the university, he is the Accountable Officer for South Bank Colleges and Principal Accounting Officer for South Bank Academies. He was elected to the Fellowship of the Royal College of Physicians (Edinburgh) for his contribution to medical research and education and recognised as an Academician by the Academy of Social Sciences for his work in areas linked to educational policy and the skills agenda.

With over 250 publications, Prof. Phoenix has held a range of visiting posts including visiting professor at King's College London and Sichuan University, China. His research focuses on molecular engineering and soft matter modelling. He is a Fellow of the Institution of Engineering and Technology, the Royal Society of Chemistry, the Royal Society of Biology, the Institute of Mathematics and Its Applications, and the Royal Society of Medicine. In 2010 he was made an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire for services to Science and Higher Education, and appointed as a Deputy Lieutenant of Greater London in 2015.

He has a strong interest in public engagement with science and engineering. In 2015 the Prime Minister appointed him as a Trustee of the Science Museum Group where he is Deputy Chair. He has also been Chair of the Science and Industry Museum.

Prof. Phoenix has worked extensively overseas, developing and leading on an overseas campus in Cyprus and a research institute in China. He was awarded an individual Excellence award by China's Vice Premier in 2014 and in 2016 was given the national Friendship Award (China) by the Premier for his outstanding contribution to the country's economic and social development.



## Dr Kelly Vere, MBE FIScT

Dr Kelly Vere MBE is the Director of Technical Strategy at the University of Nottingham where she began her career as a junior medical technician in 1999. She now leads an award-winning programme to enable the strategic and professional development of the University's 700+ technical staff across the UK and Asia. She is a passionate advocate for technical skills, roles and careers in higher education and research and has written for the Guardian, Times Higher Education and Nature.

Kelly founded and leads the Technician Commitment – a sector wide initiative to ensure visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability for the technical community across higher education and research which currently stands at over 115 institutional signatories and sector supporters. She leads a £5M Research England funded programme 'TALENT', awarded to the Midlands Innovation universities to advance status and opportunity for the technical community.

Throughout her career Kelly has created, facilitated and led a number of opportunities for the technical community. These include the UK Higher Education Technicians Summit and Papin Prizes, the Herschel Programme for Women in Technical Leadership, the UK Technology Specialist Network (TSN) and TechxFest. In 2023, it was announced that she will lead the new £5.5M UK Institute for Technical Skills & Strategy (ITSS).



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