We asked the officers to give us some feedback on our Schools Lecture Tour. The tour has been running for over 20 years, and reaches around 14,000 students each year, but we have recently had some trouble attracting applications for the position of lecturer.

The outreach officers identified a number of areas that could be improved and suggested some ways that we could improve them.

**Issues:**
- The length of time between applying to become a lecturer and completing the tour (nearly two years) – it’s likely that potential lecturers won’t be working on the same research project for two years, so this may be putting them off
- The amount of time spent delivering the lectures (typically around 4 days a month, spent away from home, for the duration of the tour).
  - Outreach officers would find it difficult to justify spending this amount of their time on one project
  - Academics would need to sacrifice time that they could otherwise spend on research – this could jeopardise their career prospects
  - Also a big personal commitment for anyone to make, and particularly for those with young families
- Some of the officers present hadn’t heard about the tour before so our publicity could be better
- Getting universities to agree to their staff taking the role on is likely to be tricky
- Some officers would have been likely to apply themselves, but had assumed the role was only open to academics

**Suggestions:**
- Run regional tours rather than one national tour to reduce time commitment and travel
- Encourage small teams to apply rather than just one lecturer, so they can share the workload
- When applications open, notify outreach officers directly
- Make it clear that outreach officers themselves are welcome to apply
- Place an editorial or at least an advert in Physics World when applications open
- Be more explicit about what the lecturer will gain from the tour
- Target people who are interested in science communications as a career, rather than those committed to research
- Provide some rough guidance on how the £20k given to the lecturers is typically spent
- Produce some detailed guidance targeted at university departments, outlining what they will gain if a member of their staff becomes the lecturer

If you have any additional suggestions/comments, please send them to Natasha Plaister (e-mail Natasha.plaister@iop.org).