

Technician Commitment

Guidance for Completing the Self-Assessment & Action Plan

The Technician Commitment is a university and research institution initiative, led by a steering group of sector bodies, with support from the Science Council and the Gatsby Charitable Foundation's Technicians Make It Happen campaign. The Commitment aims to ensure visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability for technicians working in higher education and research, across all disciplines. Universities and research institutes are invited to become signatories of the Technician Commitment and pledge action against the key challenges affecting their technical staff.

The themes of the Technician Commitment are: Visibility, Recognition, Career Development, Sustainability and Evaluating Impact. The fifth theme of Evaluating Impact takes the form of a self-assessment process, to be undertaken one year after an organisation becomes a signatory and biennially thereafter.

The self-assessment process enables the Technician Commitment Steering Group to gain an understanding of the position of each signatory organisation and the measures to be put in place to ensure that signatories are making progress against the themes outlined in the Commitment. The self-assessment process asks for contextual information, progress to date and a detailed 24-month future action plan.

The Technician Commitment Steering Group does not seek to dictate how organisations promote a positive culture for the technician community. This is a matter for autonomous institutions and the technician, research and academic community to agree. It is expected that as a minimum, signatories publicly state their Technician Commitment signatory status and institutional action plan on a dedicated and discoverable webpage, along with their named point of contact. The Steering Group would like signatories to evidence that the 'technician voice' is present in the development and formation of institutional action plans. The Technician Commitment is a collaborative endeavour and the Steering Group will support and facilitate the establishment and sharing of best practice demonstrated in the self-assessments and action plans. A vibrant community of Institutional Leads tasked with implementing the Technician Commitment is emerging and the Steering Group aims to ensure a range of forums are available to enable peers to share expertise, good practice and experiences.

To support institutional action planning, please see Appendix A for examples of activities and initiatives that have been successfully implemented in a range of universities and research institutes. Additional details are available on the Technician Commitment's dedicated online resource, available at <http://technicians.org.uk/techniciancommitment/>. Cross referencing to other sector institutional reviews relevant to technicians is welcomed; for example, institutions may wish to reference Athena SWAN applications, Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) submissions and Research Excellence Framework (REF) environment statements where technicians have been explicitly mentioned.

Please note that finalised Action Plans should be signed off at an institutional leadership level (e.g. Vice-Chancellor/President/Director level).

For any additional queries, please contact k.ver@sciencecouncil.org or tracey.dickens@gatsby.org.uk.

Technician Commitment

Evaluating Impact through Self-Assessment & Future Action Planning

Organisation: University of Hertfordshire

Name of Institutional Lead: Christopher Ivie

E-mail: c.ivie2@herts.ac.uk

Contact Number: 07791 102084

To provide some context, please provide a brief profile of your organisation (up to 250 words):

The University of Hertfordshire (UH): UH's vision is to be internationally renowned as the UK's leading business-facing university. It is innovative and enterprising and challenges individuals and organisations to excel. UH is one of the region's largest employers with over 24,000 students, 2,900 staff and a turnover of over £260 million. UH has secured more than £11m income through collaborative knowledge partnerships and makes an annual contribution of more than £1bn to the local economy, in addition to supporting more than 11,000 jobs in the region. It is also one of the top 150 universities in the world under 50 years old, according to the new Times Higher Education 150 under 50 rankings 2017. UH has achieved the top gold ranking in the Government's Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) June 2018.

Guidance and support from our Technical staff played an important role contributing to the achievement and sustainability for these rankings. UH is proud to have in excess of 200 technical staff across all schools and professional business units. UH identifies a direct link between the strategic plan and the aims of the Technician Commitment and feel this is a great milestone to build upon. Specifically building upon the growth in requirements from our technical staff across all disciplines, we are committed in providing excellent service across learning resources, distance and distributed learning and there is enormous support base required from our technical staff, both in the academic schools and within our IT department.

Please tell us how your organisation defines its technicians:

Technicians work in a variety of roles, delivering wide-ranging skills and expertise across the University, including but not limited to: science, technology, engineering, mathematics, arts, design, media (music, and screen), IT and social science subject areas. They are trained and

skilled in the techniques, tools, and technology of their subjects. They provide the practical application of knowledge, including hands-on support, and directly contribute to teaching and learning, research and wider enterprise activities

Technicians at UH are recognised as a key contact point between the University and our students and researchers, providing formal and informal support to the delivery of successful teaching, learning and research. Technical staff are attached to either an Academic School or a central Professional Services department and deliver a wide range of activities to support and enable teaching, learning and research. Central to this activity is the clear recognition of the key impact and contribution which our technicians provide to the delivery of a positive student experience.

Our technical staff are viewed as a key team who work closely with University researchers in progressing projects. Technicians also engage directly with our academic staff and students in support of student projects, ranging from dissertations through to longer term activities such as Formula Student, which involves close working with students in the design and production of a racing car which competes within a national student motor car racing tournament.

Our technical staff also have a role in contributing to the wider pastoral and wellbeing support of our students. They are accessible and in significant regular contact with our students. They are well placed to alert academic staff to potential issues or to provide informal advice and guidance and, if required, to sign post our students to wider support services.

How many technicians are there in your organisation? Please provide some information on where they are based and/or how they are structured (in terms of subject/discipline/department):

The University of Hertfordshire at the time of publication employs approximately 216 technical staff across 18 Strategic Business Units (SBUs). These include academic schools - Business, Creative Arts, Education, Engineering and Technology, Computer Science, Health and Social Work, Life and Medical Sciences and Physics, Astronomy and Maths. Technicians are also employed in the professional SBU of Library and Computing Services. Technicians are also placed within subsidiaries such as UNO, the university bus company and the Sports Village. We also have technicians working for UH within research projects inside companies such as GlaxoSmithKleine and BioPark.

Please provide details of initiatives/programmes/activities that were already in place for the technical community within your organisation prior to becoming a signatory of the Technician Commitment:

Prior to signing the Technician Commitment, UH had engaged proactively with HEaTED, providing Teaching and Learning workshops for technical staff already undertaking some

role within teaching, or for those who wish to take more of an active role within the teaching and learning at the University. UH technical staff volunteered as HEaTED's Regional Co-ordinator and as the UH institutional contact. UH hosted HEaTED regional events, delivering training to technician attendees and opportunities for 'show case' opportunities.

The Technician Commitment aims to ensure visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability for technical staff across higher education and research. Please tell us of any initiatives your organisation has put in place to address these themes since becoming a signatory of the Technician Commitment:

UH has engaged positively with the Technician Commitment seeing the objectives of the Commitment (Visibility, Recognition, Career Development and Sustainability), as directly aligning with, and supporting the achievement of, our own University strategic objectives (Education, Research, Business, International, Sustainability, Community & Partners and People). Investment in the visibility, development and recognition of the contribution of our technical staff to University teaching and learning and research; will directly contribute to achieving our own core strategic objectives as well as our goal of becoming Employer Champions with the Science Council.

Visibility

This engagement also encouraged internal developments within UH, resulting in technical staff gaining representation on the People Board and joining together in a common technical staff forum, *HertsTech*. This has created a space where the sharing of expertise and good practice can occur, and has sought to overcome potential technical staff isolation, a consequence of organisational silos and frequency of lone working. *HertsTech* is led by a steering group formed of technicians, supported by our development team, and has delivered a Technical Staff Conference, featuring updates on University and external technician developments, guest speakers and 'show and tell' sessions, led by technicians within their own work departments. *HertsTech* has also encouraged the roll-out of less formal development and engagement activities under a banner of *CaféTech*. These gatherings, supported by coffee and cakes, have created informal opportunities to engage with technical staff in a range of locations, to enable conversations, sharing of experience and practice.

HertsTech has also sought to engage with technical staff based in our Regional FE College network. This has enabled the development of local links between College based technicians and their counterparts at the University and begun sharing of experience and identification of development needs, which may be addressed via regional gatherings.

UH hosted the Technical Staff Conference in June 2017, to launch the Technician Commitment – it had strong sponsorship by the Vice-Chancellor and was an opportunity to promote accreditation.

Experience of Peter Brownhill, newly professionally registered member of technical staff, benchmarking with other institutions.

Newsletter named Connec-tech in drafting stage for termly updates to all technical staff.

Creation of Yammer group to support sharing of practice and queries and to encourage further participation amongst technicians.

Recognition

Engagement with Science Council etc to progress individual accreditation.

Promotion of formal and informal engagement activities, including technician-led drop in sessions for University staff to highlight available services and sharing of expertise. Examples of Creative Arts technicians and drop-ins with LCS technicians and wider staff to raise awareness of skills, equipment etc.

Request made to senior management for addition to Vice-Chancellor awards to celebrate 'Best Technical Staff Member of the Year' and 'Best Technical Team of the Year'.

Request to schools for nominations for next year's Papin Awards at the Higher Education Technician Summit.

Career Development

Visit to Sheffield to connect with Sheffield University colleagues and the National Technician Development Centre for Higher Education, created to assist and support their technical staff by pioneering clearly defined career pathways. The aim of the visit being to share best practice with Sheffield and help understand their recognition for technical staff and career pathways available, including technicians who teach.

Creation of Project Leader role to build further relationships within the technical community, and clearly define and expand on current visibility, recognition, developmental opportunities and sustainability within our current technical staff body.

Identifying cost and uptake projections for professional registration with a view to allocate funding for the first year of registration and membership across the University.

3 Library and Computing Services technicians started degree apprenticeships.

Sustainability

10 days allocated to all technical staff for their continued professional development.

Planning towards creation of Technician (Teaching) role, draft job descriptions etc.

Identifying development opportunities within career pathways for technical staff with an aim to adopt AUA framework across all disciplines.

Central email techscommit@herts.ac.uk created to support technical staff with a gateway via email for any Technical Staff Project interest.

Please provide a 24-month action plan, detailing future plans to ensure your organisations addresses the themes of the Technician Commitment and details of how impact will be evidenced: (this may be detailed here or attached to this document as an appendix):

Please see attached 24 month action plan.

Please evidence how the ‘technician voice’ was present in the development and formation of the institutional action plan:

University of Hertfordshire’s technical staff project has been led by the People, Development and Change department along with the Steering Group, which comprises of members of technical staff and technical managers. The Steering Group meets each semester and is a voice for University technical staff that has helped shape our action plan and supported its progression. After our first year, technical staff ownership of the action plan has been further reinforced by a secondment opportunity. A member of our technical staff team has been seconded into a project leadership role to ensure engagement with the Technician Commitment, continued activity with University technicians and progression of our action plan.

The project leader actively participates and attends staff-led sessions such as HertsTech and meets with various technicians across multiple disciplines; this is with a view to communicating progress against the action plan and then in addition, capturing feedback. This in turn allows us to capture the essence of what is important to technical staff and raise issues and guidance appropriately.

Additionally, sponsored by our Technical Staff Champion from the Office of the Vice-Chancellor, they play a vital role in establishing an ongoing link between the technician voice via the steering group, project leader for the technician roles and thoughts to be heard at a senior management level. This ongoing support is paramount to the success of our project and our commitment to all technical staff. Technical Staff are also represented on the People Board and in the Health and Safety Consultative Committee.

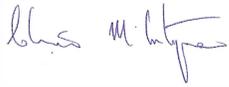
Please confirm that your Technician Commitment status and action plan is published on your organisation’s website and provide the relevant URL here:

<http://staffnet.herts.ac.uk/the-technician-commitment-we-are-in.htm> - OLD URL

[New URL to be published at www.herts.ac.uk](http://www.herts.ac.uk) - TBC

Website area under construction.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris McIntyre".

Chris McIntyre, Dean of Cultural Affairs and Technical Staff Champion

(Technician Commitment Nominated Institutional Lead)

Date: 10 October 2018

Signed:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Quintin McKellar".

Professor Quintin McKellar

(Technician Commitment Signatory – Leader of Institution)

Date: 17 October 2018

Appendix A: Examples of activities and initiatives to address the themes of the Technician Commitment

Please note that this is not an exhaustive list, it intends to demonstrate example activities to support institutions in action planning.

Theme	Example Activities
<p>Visibility</p> <p>Ensure that technicians within the organisation are identifiable and that the contribution of technicians is visible within and beyond the institution</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisations can identify how many technicians they employ • Technician roles have clear job descriptions • A consistent policy that where technicians have contributed to research outputs and grants, they are named as authors • Technicians to feature in organisation prospectuses and marketing materials • Technicians to sit on decision making committees where appropriate • Technicians visible in costing mechanisms for research grants • A mechanism for celebrating technician achievements across the organisation • Organisation strategy documents to include technicians where appropriate • A vibrant 'Technician Network'
<p>Recognition</p> <p>Support technicians to gain recognition through professional registration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation communicates the opportunity to become professionally registered to technical staff (Science Council, Engineering Council, BCS). Conferment of the organisational level Science Council Employer Champion award in recognition of the support given to technical staff to gain professional registration and engage in continued professional development • Recognition and support of the teaching aspect of many technician roles through the accreditation of teaching practice through the Higher Education Academy • Internal award schemes recognise the contribution of technical staff • Nominations to external award schemes that recognise the contribution of technical staff
<p>Career Development</p> <p>Enable career progression opportunities for technicians through the provision of clear, documented career pathways</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technician specific professional career paths/frameworks which clearly document progression opportunities • Professional development opportunities, signposted to technicians and aligned to career pathways • A dedicated webpage showcasing case studies of technician careers • Expansion of technician specific job families in recognition of high level technical specialisms
<p>Sustainability</p> <p>Ensure the future sustainability of technical skills across the organisation and that technical expertise is fully utilised</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate succession planning for technical roles including the analysis of technician profiles to ensure future sustainability of skills within the organisation • Secondment/placement programmes for technical staff to develop new skills • A technician trainee/apprenticeship programme • Utilisation of the Apprenticeship Levy to train and upskill existing staff

University of Hertfordshire Technician Commitment Action Plan 2018-2021

Theme/Action	Led By	Phase 1 (Jun 2017- May 2018)	Phase 2 (Jun 2018 - May 2019)	Phase 3 (Jun 2019- Jun 2020)	Success Criteria	RAG
Ongoing Actions						
Confirm future project sponsorship and governance beyond phase 2	PL		Apr-19		Future project sponsor confirmed by CEG	
Complete biennial Self-Assessment and 24 month Action Plan for Science Council	PL		Oct-18	Jun-20	Gain and maintain Employer Champion Status through Science Council	
Collating and publishing nationally recognised development opportunities.	PT		Sep-18		Data published on SharePoint	
Promote good practice at local level to enhance visibility of technical staff within area	S			Jun-20	Employer Champion Status, Technical VC Award	
Building and enhancing technical networks and enabling relationships/mentoring within the technical community	PL			Sep-19	Technical staff participating in Leading through Coaching	
Evaluating the impact of technical staff and their influence on the Student Experience	G		Nov-18		HESA, MFQ, NSS	
Encouragement of technical staff to engage with project objectives	PT			Sep-19	Local development budget spent on Prof Bodies fees; CPD Days (Core Report)	
Visibility						
Marketing and Communications strategy for the development of supporting internally and externally facing websites and publications	M&C/PL		Oct-18		External website, Staffnet, FACES, HertsTech Connec-Tech	
Establishing local communication activities for the Technical staff community	PT		Oct-18		HertsTech; Café Scientifique, workshops, drop in sessions	
Establish links and affiliations with partnership institutes and local FE/HE Colleges	PL		Jan-19		Shadowing, collaborative projects, joint training	
Introduce a biennial Technical Staff Conference from 2019/20	PL			Jun-20	Attendance Records	
Identify all Technical Staff employed by UH	PT		Oct-18		Compare HR technical staff report with TSP survey	
Recognition						
Promote Professional Registration with support from CEG	G		Feb-19		Increase in professional registrations	
To increase submissions by technical staff for a range of national and international awards and publications	PT		May-19	May-20	PAPIN	
Evidencing the role of technical staff in Teaching and Learning	PL		Nov-18		HESA Return	
To explore the development and approval of a new hybrid role of Technician/Lecturer, with appropriate review of grading	PL/G			Jun-19	Approved structure and hybrid posts	
Aim to introduce a category specific to technical staff for the VC Awards	PS/G			Jun-19	First nominations and award	
To commence application for Employer Champion Status	PL			Jun-19	Application submitted	
To gain commitment for a review of pay and grading including progression criteria for technical staff to ensure fairness and transparency across SBU's	PS/G			Jun-19	Approve review	
Career Development						
To support the development of technical career pathways through publishing examples of discipline specific case studies	PT			Sep-19	Publications, Mapped journey on websites	
To support the development of opportunities for technical staff through avenues such as: Apprenticeships; mentoring, coaching and shadowing etc.	PT		Feb-19		Shadowing application form, Career pathway sessions, Networks developed	
To make available and promote a pool of resources that provide career planning toolkits	PT		Feb-19		Website/SharePoint	
Maintain and evolve membership of Higher Education and Technicians Education Development (HEaTED)	PL			Sep-19	Increase in regional activity/UH hosted events	
Sustainability						
To identify areas of concern regarding balancing time constraints with development activities e.g. off the job training	PL		Jan-19		Paper to CEG outlining issues and recommendations	
To identify means of delivering succession planning to support the future business needs of specialist roles	PL/G			Sep-19	Paper to CEG outlining issues and recommendations	
To develop strategy to enable professional registration, apprenticeships, etc.	PL/G			Nov-19	Workshops, drop-in sessions, literature, webpages	
Evidencing the impact of technical staff on the student experience	PL			Dec-19	Module Questionnaires, NSS, feedback	
Collaborate with local education authorities to promote technical careers and work experience opportunities	PL		Feb-19		Herts College Consortium	
Increase student work experience placements by creating guidance and resources for managers	PL			Jun-20	Resources and guidance created	
Complete Self Assessment annually to remain compliant towards Employer Champion Status to reiterate the University's commitment towards the Technical Staff community	PL		May-19	May-20	Self-assessment completed, compliance maintained	
To meet criteria for UH to become an Employer Champion	PS/PL/G			Nov-19	Submission criteria met, application paperwork completed, Award received	
Technical Staff Wellbeing						
To make available and promote a pool of wellbeing resources tailored specifically to meet the needs to Technical staff	PT			Nov-19	Links to EAP, Mindfulness, Counselling, Mentoring, coaching etc. collated and published	
To identify areas of concern regarding work-life balance	PS/G			Nov-19	Action plans in place to address identified issues	

Key		RAG
Code	Title	
PS	Project Sponsor	Delayed
G	Governance	In Progress
PL	Project Lead	Completed/Start Pending
PT	Project Team	
S	Stakeholders	
M&C	Marketing and Communications	