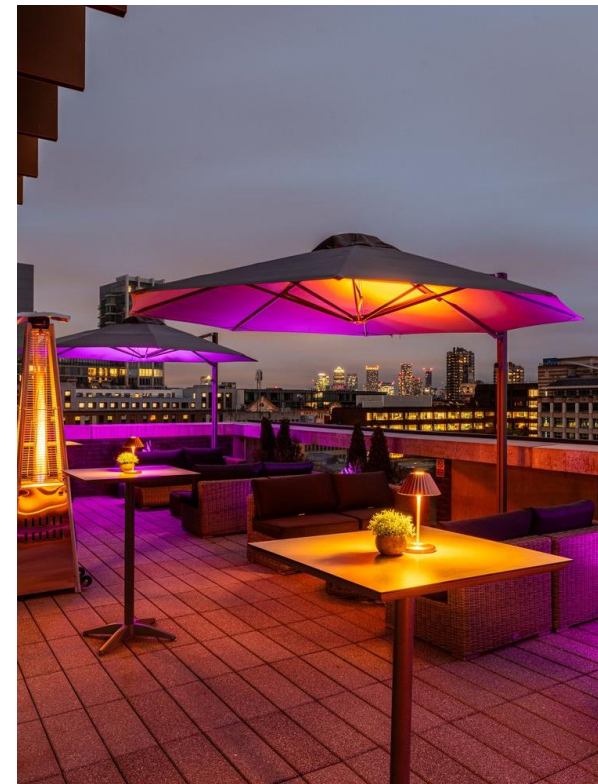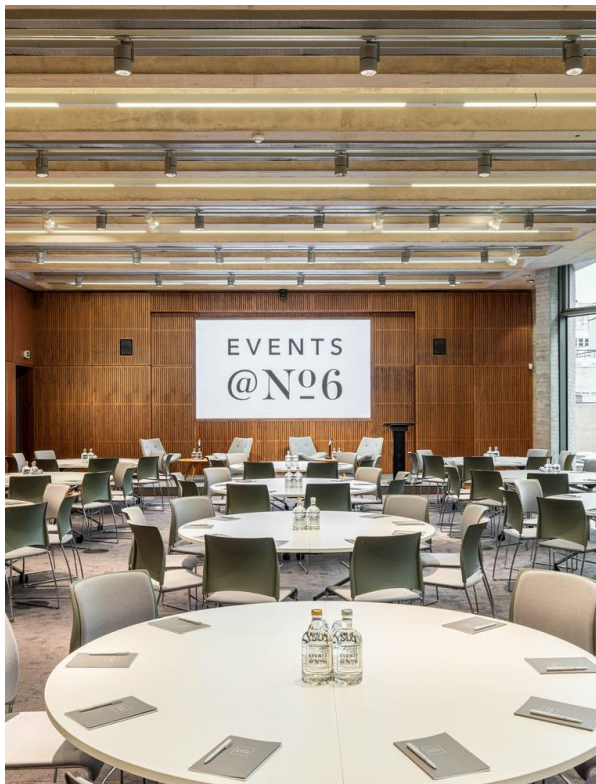# 13th Signatory Event

Welcome to London

19 November 2024, Events @ No 6

Message from Kelly

I'm truly sorry not to be with you all today for our 13th Technician Commitment Conference alongside our signatory and supporter organisations.

I'm incredibly disappointed to miss this opportunity to connect with you all, but I'm currently recovering from some unexpected complications following surgery. I'll be back with you for our next event in the Spring.

I want to extend a heartfelt thanks to the Technician Commitment team for their hard work in putting together such an engaging agenda for today. You'll have the chance to hear vital sector updates, exchange best practices, and contribute your insights to the future of the Technician Commitment.

Wishing you all an inspiring and invigorating day! I very much look forward to seeing you soon.

Kelly

Agenda - Morning

10.00   **Registration, refreshments & networking**

10.30   **Welcome & Technician Commitment Update**

11.00   **Round table introductions**

11.15   **Coffee and refreshments**

11.45   **TC Index - Update and roundtable discussion**

12.45   **TC Index Feedback**

13.00   **Lunch**

Agenda - Afternoon
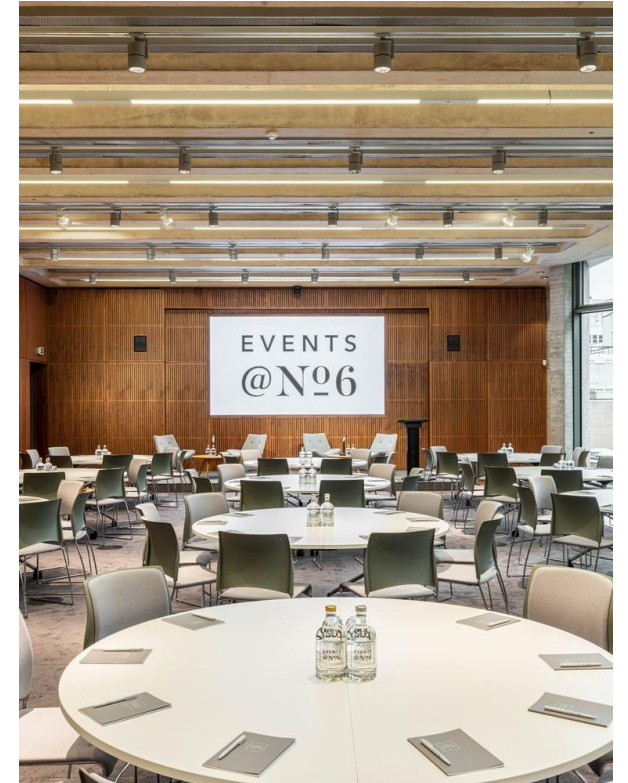
14.00   **TSN ROKS and New ITSS Networks (ESN and EDIN)**

14.30   **Regional/Discipline Networks**

15.00   **Networks Roundtable**

15.15   **Coffee and refreshments**

15.45   **Strategic Technical Leaders Report**

16.15   **REF update from Research England**

16.45   **Closing remarks**

18.00   **Evening drinks and networking reception**

ITSS
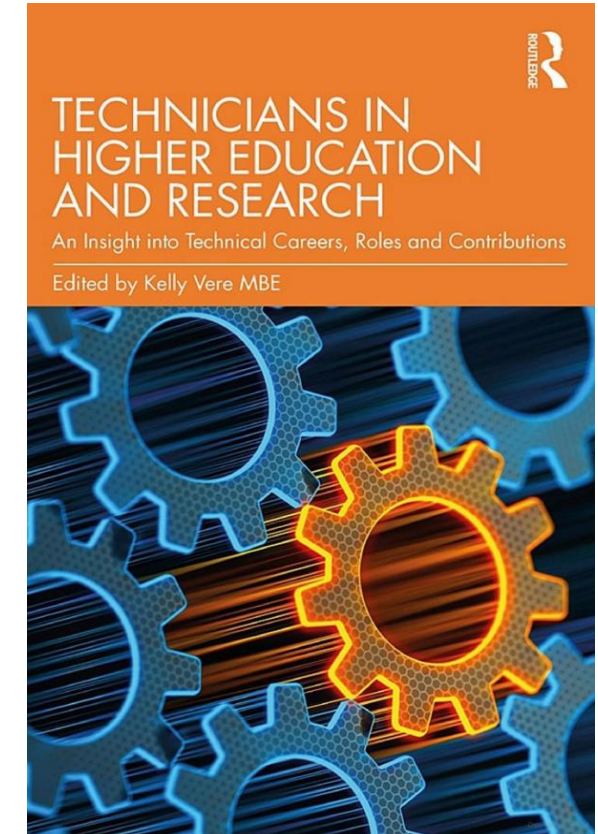
Learning and Development Academy

Research and Policy Group

Community and Practice Hub

National Technical Networks and Community

How we will deliver change

Learning and Development Academy

VIVIEN THOMAS
Technical Leadership Programmes

Cohort 2
- January – February 2025
- Applications close 29 November 2024

Delivery method
- Two sessions online
- Two sessions in-person

Leadership in Action for Technicians

Coaching and Feedback programme

Now Full

How we will deliver change

Learning and Development Academy

Project Management for Technicians

Learn the principles of project management and develop new tools and techniques that you can implement immediately.

Apply now: Closes 29 November 2024
Delivered: Jan - April 2025
Method: Online (In-person celebration event)
Cost: Free (travel cost for celebration event to be covered by your institution)

WinterFest 2025

A variety of online learning and development workshops, panel discussions and talks delivered by technicians, for technicians delivered online across 2 weeks.

Delivered: 13 - 23 Jan 2025
Method: Online
Cost: Free

Registration now open

How we will deliver change

Research and Policy Group

- Definitions of strategic technical leaders

- The nature of the roles, scope and responsibilities

- How the roles were created

- Support and development wanted by strategic technical leaders

- The benefits of having a strategic technical leader

Strategic Technical Leadership: Advocacy, Empowerment and Transformation

National Technical Networks and Community

Technician Commitment

Update

New Signatories and Supporters

Signatory

- Children's Cancer Institute – first international research institute to sign
- The University of the West of Scotland
- Leeds Arts University
- Bangor University

Supporter

- GuildHE
- UniGreenScheme
- Australasian Cytometry Society
- GAMBICA
  (*UK Trade Association for Instrumentation, Control, Automation & Lab Technology*)

Simplified Peer Review Process
Two submission windows January and July

July 2024
- Thirty submissions received, processed and timely feedback
- *Huge shout out to Peer Reviewers – cohort of 50+*

January 2025
- Deadline 31st January 2025

Additional Peer reviewers have volunteered
- Training to follow

But what is the approach after phase 3, 2027 and beyond?
- TC index ?

Sarah Bennett – University of Warwick

Sally Carter – Loughborough University

Jodie Chatfield – University of Nottingham

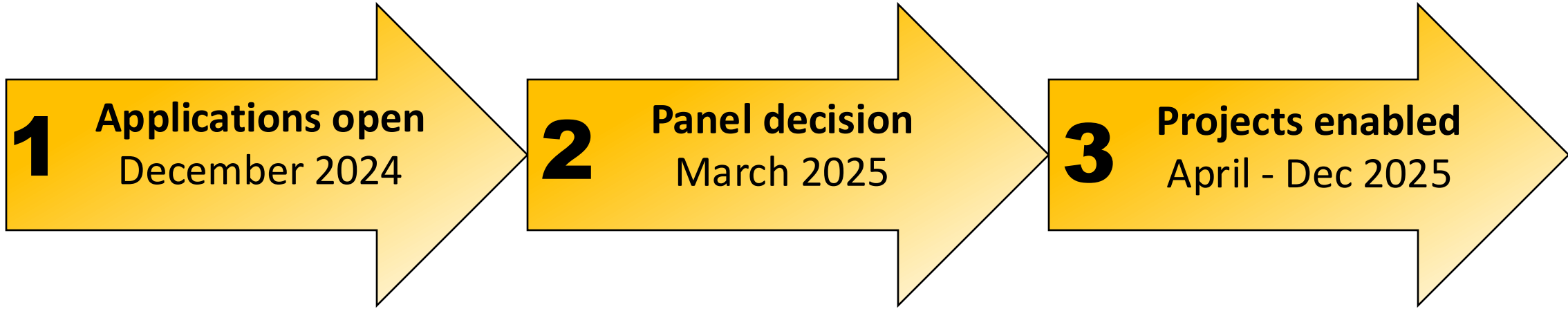Mark Dabee Saltmarsh – Cardiff Metropolitan University

Ashley Grimmer – University of Cambridge

Jenna Lowe – University of Liverpool

James McStravick – Manchester Metropolitan University (now University of Huddersfield)

Mamta Sharma – Wellcome Sanger Institute

Collaboration Fund

1 **Applications open**
December 2024

2 **Panel decision**
March 2025

3 **Projects enabled**
April - Dec 2025

Eligibility Criteria

- Advancing one or more of the key pillars
- Sustainable beyond the initial funding
- Organisation that applies must be a signatory
- Support from the Technician Commitment Lead
- UK based partner external to your organisation
- Project report, outlining the activity and the outputs and impact

- **Reports for 2024 projects will be published soon**

How we will deliver change

Community and Practice Hub

UK INSTITUTE FOR TECHNICAL SKILLS & STRATEGY

ITSS

Career Pathways Lab

Sarah Allen – ITSS Career Pathways Lead

Sarah.allen@itss.org.uk

Technical Pathways Lab

ITSS will address the need for visibility of **clearly defined** career pathways and progression routes within HE and research.

ITSS will establish the "Technical Pathways Lab" and work with a **pilot group** of employers, partners and technicians to **reimagine technical career pathways** and develop, trial and evaluate new progression routes including the piloting of narrative CVs in technical roles.

Career Pathways Action Group members
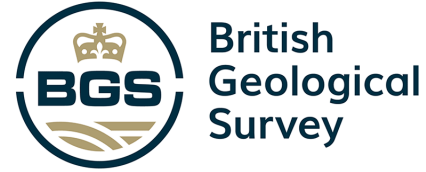
Career Pathways Action Group

- 22 Universities / Research Institutions

- 44 Senior Technical and HR leadership members

- Recognition of challenges and focus project areas

- Innovating and piloting change in specific areas of the pathway

Project Areas

- Apprenticeships / T levels
- Rebranding technical careers (externally and with academics / staff)
- Understanding recognition for technicians
- Changing the organisational culture around training and development
- Succession planning

- Defining and mapping the technical workforce
- Creating a toolkit for Career pathways / promotional pathways

ITSS Consulting is a not-for-profit professional development partner for the technical community in higher education and research.

We're from the sector, specialising in solutions to future-proof technical skills, roles and careers.

Learning and Development

Organisational Change

People, Diversity and Wellbeing

Technical Working Environments

Visit:
https://itss.org.uk/ itss-consulting/

What is ITSS Consulting? Wed 27 Nov 2024, 11am (Online)

read more

Register for our webinar

UK INSTITUTE FOR
TECHNICAL
SKILLS & STRATEGY

7 % ↑ in the number of universities hosting T Level industry placements since May

We have had engagement with a further **21** universities and research institutions since May

**2** institutions that were preparing to host are now hosting T Level industry placements

5 new institutions have confirmed they are hosting T Level industry placements

4 new universities are now preparing to host T Level industry placements

Number of Institutions

100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0

Hosting placements   Status Unknown

■ May   ■ November
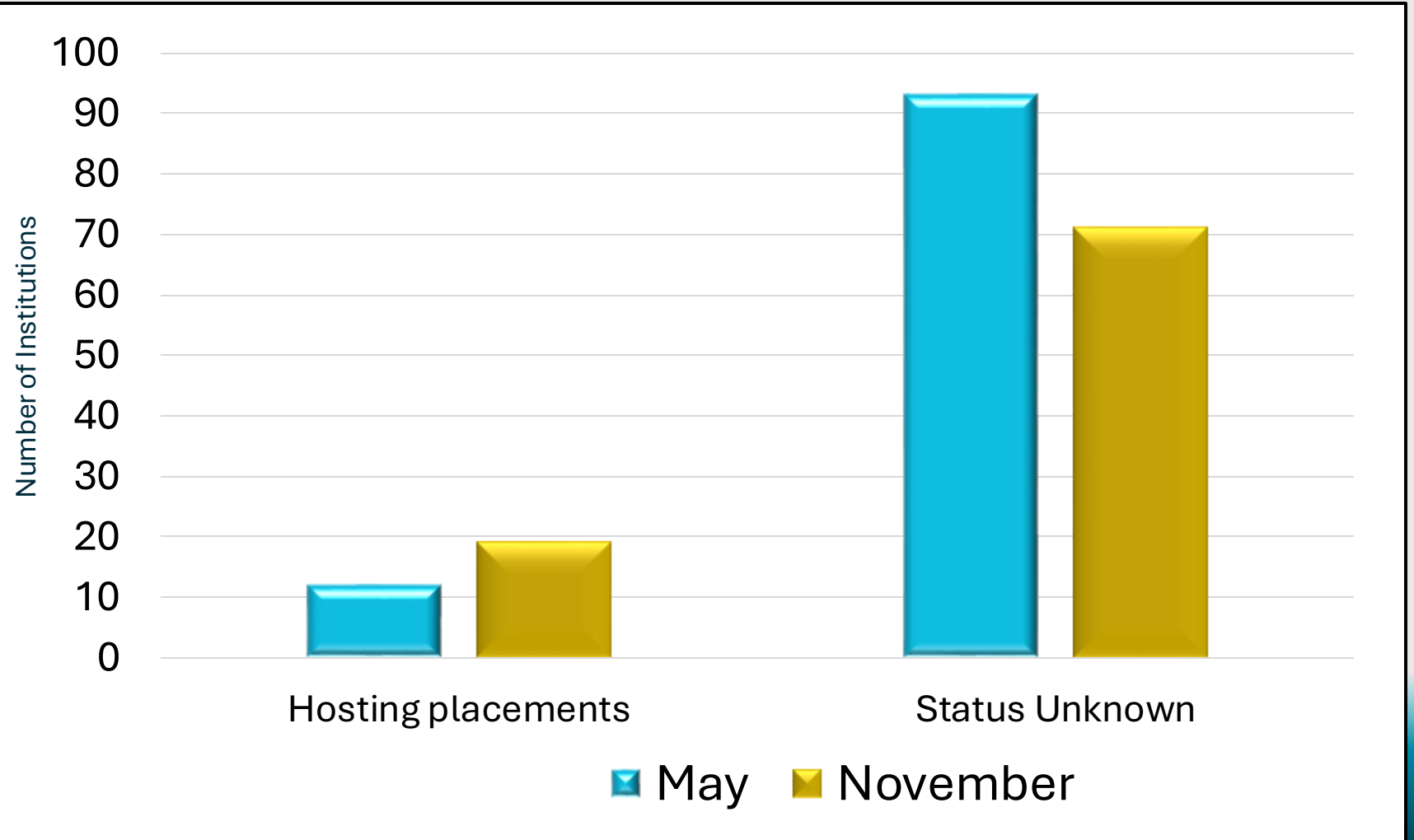
How does this look across England?
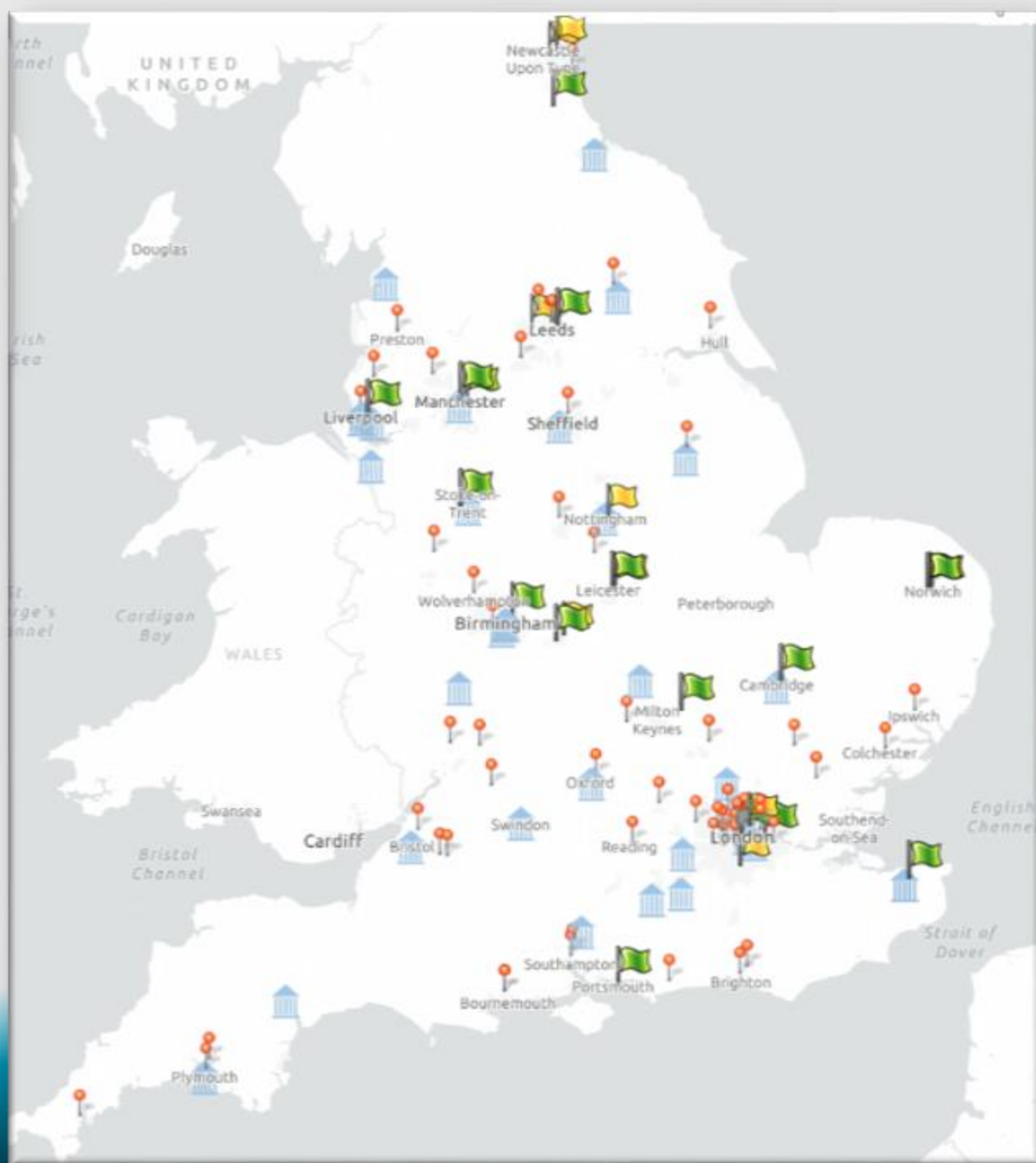
Benefits of hosting T Level Industry placements

UK INSTITUTE FOR TECHNICAL SKILLS & STRATEGY

Recruiting New Talent

Working with T Level students gives you access to new, diverse talent. Industry placements can be a chance to assess potential candidates to fill your employment or apprenticeship vacancies and may reduce recruitment costs.

Technical Skill Development

Bringing T Level students into your team can help cultivate their skills, laying the foundation for a new generation of technical talent and your future workforce.

Staff Professional Development

Managing T Level students offers staff a unique opportunity to enhance their leadership and management skills, supporting career development.

Increase Productivity

Gain an extra pair of hands to support your team. T Level students could perform some of the duties of an existing apprentice when they are off-site, as well as having their own responsibilities.

Raise Awareness

Promote your university as a significant employer and a fantastic place to work.

Collaborating with local providers will attract students to T Level qualifications and inspire more young people to pursue rewarding technical careers.

Support Social Mobility

Hosting industry placements can help showcase your institution to students who may not have considered it as a place to work or study.

Benefits

Increase University Funding

Engagement with T Level industry placements provides evidence to support your self assessment score for the public community engagement perspective narrative statement, in the knowledge exchange framework (KEF).

Technician Commitment

Hosting industry placements supports Technician Commitment action plans. This initiative increases visibility, career development and sustainability of your technical workforce.

Civic Duty

Support your local community; partnering with Further Education providers in your region to create opportunities, such as industry placements, for young people demonstrates your commitment to the local community.

T Level industry placement initiative and Technician Commitment

Technician Commitment: Initial Self-Assessment & Action Plan Guidance

The Technician Commitment is a university and research institution initiative, led by a steering group of sector bodies, hosted by the UK Institute for Technical Skills & Strategy. 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 12-18 months after an organisation becomes a signatory and every three years thereafter.

The self-assessment process enables the Technician Commitment 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 initial self-assessment process asks for contextual information, progress to date and a detailed 24-month future action plan.

The Technician Commitment 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 Technician Commitment asks signatories to evidence that the 'technician voice' is present in the development and formation of institutional action plans. The Technician Commitment is a collaborative endeavor and 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 continually developing and the Steering Board 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 techniciancommitment.org.uk. 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), Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF)

Technician Commitment Initial Self-Assessment & Action Plan

Evaluating Impact through Self-Assessment & Future Action Planning

Organisation:

Name of Institutional Lead:

E-mail:

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

2. Please tell us how your organisation defines its technicians.

3. 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).

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. Please provide a 24-month action plan, detailing future plans to ensure your institution 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.

T Level initiative and your Technician Commitment Action Plan

UK INSTITUTE FOR TECHNICAL SKILLS & STRATEGY

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. Please provide a 24-month action plan, detailing future plans to ensure your institution 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.

Themes of the Technician Commitment

UK INSTITUTE FOR TECHNICAL SKILLS & STRATEGY

Visibility

Welcoming T Level industry placement students increases the visibility of technicians and technical roles within higher education and research. This allows young people to gain firsthand insight into the work technicians do in your organisation.

Recognition

Hosting industry placements allows young people to appreciate the valuable contributions technical staff make in research, teaching, and beyond the institution, inspiring them to pursue technical careers.

Career Development

Coordinating or supervising a T Level industry placement student offers career development opportunities, allowing staff to build leadership and management skills.

Sustainability

Integrating T Level industry placements and planning for their progression into your workforce will help to secure the future sustainability of technical expertise across the organisation. This approach allows you to fully harness and embed vital technical skills within your next generation of technical talent.

Progression Success: Apprenticeships & Employment

UK INSTITUTE FOR TECHNICAL SKILLS & STRATEGY

T Level Engineering student, Millie Reid secured a Level 4 Engineering Manufacturing Technician Apprenticeship

Durham University

3 T Level Digital students secured apprenticeships

UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL

James Ward secured a Laboratory Scientist Degree Apprenticeship at Innospec

WARWICK THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Digital & Technology Solutions Professional Degree Apprenticeship & Level 5 Data Engineer Higher Apprenticeship

Student progression success: Employment

Will Cooper
secured a casual full-time contract over the summer in the Roxby Lab to complete a project

Francis Aclan
secured full-time employment at the Sainsbury Laboratory
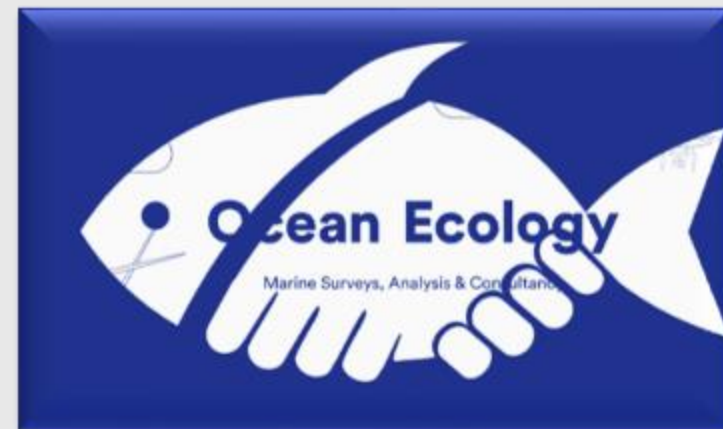
Two T Level laboratory science students were offered full-time employment at Ocean Ecology

Support for Hosting Industry Placements

T Level Industry Placement Toolkit

- Steps to getting started
- Benefits to help promote within the uni
- Key considerations to help with planning
- Starter kit for coordinators
- Starter kit for line managers

Events for your calendar

UK INSTITUTE FOR TECHNICAL SKILLS & STRATEGY

T Level Celebration Week

- December 2-6th
- Share your involvement with T Levels on socials

The role of the line manager and mentor – hosting T Level students in the workplace

- Wednesday 4th December 10am

I'M A *T-LEVELS* SUPPORTER! #TLEVELSWEEK

Thank you

Any questions?

Jo.Hartley-Metcalfe@itss.org.uk

Simon Wilson

Round Table Introductions

10:45-11:00

Coffee and Refreshments

11:15-11:45

TC Index

Update and round table discussion
11:45-12:45

Technician Commitment Index
Simon Breeden

Technician Commitment (Brief!) Background

Technician Commitment has raised the profile of the technical community

- Started with 36 Founding Signatories
  - Now grown to over 110 signatories and 15 Supporter organisations
- Challenged to reimagine the Peer Review Process
  - Review carried out and process revised and deployed in 2024
  - Requires slight iteration(s) which is an ongoing piece of work at TCHQ
- Over the last few years the community has challenged us to do more
  - Not only facilitate positive change through the existing peer review process, but also…
- ***Provide a framework by which an institution can index (measure) progress***
  - Institutionally assess impact of the Commitment, benchmarked across the sector
  - Marker of how well their organisation is doing in its Technician Commitment journey
  - Indicating what opportunities there are for further progress and impact
  - Could also be used for REF People, Culture and Environment (PCE) Statement

Technician Commitment
Signatory Form

The Technician Commitment has been developed to address key issues affecting the technical community in academia and research. In becoming a signatory to the Technician Commitment,

_____

hereby commits to act across five key areas:

Visibility
Ensure that all technicians within the organisation are identifiable and that the contribution of technicians is visible within and beyond the institution.

Recognition
Support technicians to gain recognition through professional registration and external awards schemes.

Career Development
Enable career progression opportunities for technicians through the provision of clearly documented career pathways.

Sustainability
Ensure the future sustainability of technical skills across the organisation and that technical expertise is fully utilised.

Evaluating Impact
Regularly assess the impact of actions taken in support of the commitment to ensure their effectiveness.

Signed

Date

Nominated Institutional Lead
We hereby nominate _____ (name/email/phone)
as the lead contact for taking forward our commitment.

TC Index Workshop Cardiff, May 24

- Signatory Event, Cardiff, May 2024: Three questions asked

  1. Is an index useful?

  2. Are the proposed index questions robust and can they feasibly be answered?

  3. What form should the index output take?

- You said……..

TC Index Workshop Cardiff, May 24

- Signatory Event, Cardiff, May 2024

1. Is an index useful?

        Yes *(with some cautions and queries)*

- Not just REF focussed (bigger than that)
- Applicable to all signatories (teaching, specialist, RI)
- Who is it useful for? (VC/SLT, technicians, others?)
- Drive and accelerate (institutional) change
    - *TALENT policy Commission Recommendations?*
- Real, real risk of change in ethos: Competition vs collaboration (inclusivity)

TC Index Workshop Cardiff, May 24

- Signatory Event, Cardiff, May 2024

2. Are the proposed index questions robust and can they feasibly be answered?

Yes

- Based on the four Technician Commitment pillars
- Align to signatory action plans (existing)
- Wary of additional admin burden (data light)
- Less yes/no, fewer tick boxes (sliding scale of responses)
  - *More detail, evidence of impact and open questions required, less REF-ey*
- Encourage and not penalise (supportive initiative)
- Consider weighting of questions?

Proposed Questions to be included in the Index (Cardiff, May 2024)

1	Is your institution a signatory to the Technician Commitment?
2	If yes, how long has your institution been a signatory? *Score should be triangulated with length of time engaged with this agenda*

3	If yes, are your institutional Technician Commitment self-assessments and action plans up to date?
4	Do you have an institutional strategic technical lead who focuses on the strategic direction of technical skills and careers at your institution?
5	Does your institution collect, analyse, and report on technician staff data?
6	Does your institution provide opportunities and mechanisms to move between career pathways and across sectors, encouraging more movement and collaboration between academia, industry and the third sector.
7	Does your institution undertake targeted and specific action to address the equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) challenges facing the technical community, including the low numbers of technicians from Black, Asian, and ethnic minority backgrounds and the lack of women in technical leadership roles.
8	Do technical career pathways at your institution include both vocational and academic entry routes?
9	Does your institution ensure visibility of clearly defined technical career pathways and progression routes, with accurate and standardised job descriptions?
10	Does your institution ensure inclusion of technical expertise within end-to-end recruitment processes when hiring for technical roles, including at the job description development stage?
11	Do you have a promotional pathway for your technical specialist staff?
12	Do you support technical colleagues to be PIs/CIs on research grants?
13	Do you have an institutional policy that ensures that technical staff are named on research outputs as authors, inventors, etc.?
14	Does your institution provide clear and consistent guidance to ensure technical contributions are costed appropriately, and is that guidance consistently followed?
15	Does your institution support outreach and public engagement activities regarding technical careers in local schools and colleges, to increase visibility of technical career opportunities to young people?
16	Do you have an institutional mechanism to support technical staff to attend external professional development activities?
17	Do technical staff sit on appropriate institution and sector level decision-making committees and boards, including those that discuss sector policy developments?
18	Does your institution maintain partnerships with organisations and initiatives that provide technical and vocational training (e.g. Catapult Centres) to ensure knowledge and skills sharing, facilitate the identification of skills needed for emerging technologies, and to inform the development of suitable future training?

TC Index Workshop Cardiff, May 24

- Signatory Event, Cardiff, May 2024

3. What form should the index output take?

- Publicly available classification/banding (not a score)
  - *(Scoring is essential but confidential)*
- Sharing of classification should be optional
- Theme: classification for each Technician Commitment pillar
  - *Could combine to give an overall award classification?*
- Index to measure progress (not attainment)
- Peer review community could score (additional training)
- Collaboration across signatories a **requirement** for highest classification

TC Index: Board(s) and Technical Council Advice/Steer

- ITSS Advisory Board, Technical Council and Technician Commitment Steering Board input
  - Criteria must be exceptionally robust to maintain engagement
  - An index has the potential to influence behaviour at a senior institutional level
  - Simplicity is crucial, with a strong emphasis on the feedback loop for organisations
  - The index should prioritise progress scores rather than adopting a deficit model
  - This initiative will alter the relationship with institutions
    - Technician Commitment/ITSS should carefully consider this, particularly during a pilot phase
    - Potentially run a desktop pre-pilot first to identify unintended consequences
  - TC Team should be aware of potential bias inherent in a peer-reviewed approach
  - The scoring element should be optional
  - Open to all Signatory Organisations: RIs, small(er) specialised, teaching focussed institutions
  - Multiplicity of concordats/initiatives in the sector: need to not replicate or duplicate work
  - A 'score' runs the risk of producing a league table and potential loss of signatories/supporters
    - Poor classification could lead to institutional withdrawal: those that need most support lose out

TC Index: The summer and beyond….

Technician Commitment Index: The Proposal

Align assessment criteria to pillars of the TC and the TALENT Policy Commission recommendations

- Build on the existing Peer Review Process to minimise impact/workload on Signatories (TCHQ)
- Four classification levels for each of the four pillars
  - *Excluded: No action has been taken; the organisation has not yet considered or initiated any activities in this area*
  - *Embryonic: Initial stages of action have begun; the organisation is in the very early phases of development, planning, or exploration in this area*
  - *Emerging: Noticeable progress has been made; the organisation has started to implement actions and is beginning to see initial outcomes and development in this area*
  - *Embedded: Actions are fully integrated and established; the organisation has successfully incorporated practices and activities in this area as a core part of its operations and culture*
  - Each institution will be graded under each of the four pillars
    - Visibility, Recognition, Career Development and Sustainability
- Potentially combine to give an overall TC Index classification provided in the feedback letter?

Technician Commitment Index: The Proposal

- This formally kicks in at stage 4 (2027) but could be requested at an earlier stage submission
  - *Currently we have over 110 Signatories*
- TCHQ need to produce appropriate guidance for signatories (and training)
  - *Need to encourage collaboration and collegiality*
  - *Is it (simply) a self-help tool to show where institutions are in each of the four areas?*
  - *How can TC/ITSS better support*
- Build on the peer review process (add in the scoring element)
  - *Workload on the peer review community is a real concern*
- Needs to be piloted to determine unintended consequences (2025/2026)
  - *Pilot institutions score stands until 2030 (2027 plus 36 months!) or can resubmit?*
  - *Classification stands for three years (aligned to existing action planning routine)*

Technician Commitment Index: The Output

The University of Nowhere Whatsoever would be:

Embedded in Visibility

Embryonic in Recognition

Embryonic in Career Development

Emerging in Sustainability

Potentially........
With an Overall TC Classification of Emerging

Technician Commitment Index: Benefits & Risks

- There are benefits to this approach…..
  - Institutions can evidence overall progress since signing the Technician Commitment
  - Institutions can identify areas of strength and share good practice
  - Support TC leads in discussions with the senior leadership teams
  - Identify areas of focus for action plans
- But there are also risks…..
  - The change in relationship with the signatory community
  - Potential loss of the community of practice
  - Competition between institutions (league tables? gamification? is competition bad?)
  - Those that 'don't do well' withdraw meaning those that need the support most lose it first
- And remember the community (you) asked us to do this

TC Index: The Criteria (Visibility)

- The five criteria that **Visibility** is scored against are:

    V1 To what extent are technicians visible internally/externally through websites, press releases, articles, blogs, institutional social media, newsletters etc

    V2 To what extent does the institution understand the number and location of technicians within the organisation and collect, analyse and report on technician staff data?

    V3 How far does the institution go in supporting outreach and public engagement activities regarding technical careers in local schools and colleges, to increase visibility of technical career opportunities to young people?

    V4 Do technical staff sit on appropriate institution- and/or sector level decision-making committees and boards, including those that discuss sector policy developments?

    V5 To what degree are technicians at this institution engaging positively with current and future opportunities that are available to them?

    Each of these is scored out of five giving a total score for visibility out of 25

TC Index: The Criteria (Recognition)

- The five criteria that **Recognition** is scored against are:

  R1 To what extent does the institution include technical expertise within end-to-end recruitment processes when hiring for technical roles, including at the job description development stage and on the interview panel?

  R2 Are internal technician award schemes available, and to what extent are technical colleagues supported in applications to these and/or external award schemes

  R3 To what level are technical colleagues supported to be PIs/CIs on research/other grants

  R4 Does the institution have a policy that ensures technical staff are named on research outputs as authors, inventors, etc. and how much evidence is there of compliance?

  R5 Does the institution provide clear and consistent guidance to ensure technical contributions are costed appropriately and what evidence is there that guidance is consistently followed?

  Each of these is scored out of five giving a total score for Recognition out of 25

TC Index: The Criteria (Career Development)

- The five criteria that **Career Development** is scored against are:

    CD1 How does the institution provide opportunities and mechanisms to move between career pathways and across sectors, encouraging more movement and collaboration between academia, industry and the third sector?

    CD2 How far has the institution gone to ensure visibility of clearly defined technical career pathways and progression routes, with accurate and standardised job descriptions?

    CD3 Does the institution have a career pathway for technicians and if so, how far has the delivery work been completed?

    CD4 To what degree does the institution enable technicians to upskill within the workplace through mechanisms such as mentoring, job shadowing, job swaps, secondments etc?

    CD5 To what extent does the institution support technical staff CPD including external professional development activities?

    Each of these is scored out of five giving a total score for Career Development out of 25

TC Index: The Criteria (Sustainability)

- The five criteria that **Sustainability** is scored against are:

  S1 To what level is there a strategic approach taken to leadership and direction of technical skills and careers at the institution, including but not limited to, the appointment of a Strategic Technical Lead?

  S2 How far has the institution demonstrated investment in a new pipeline of technical talent and horizon scanning new and emerging technologies/skills to feed into institutional succession planning for the technical community

  S3 What targeted and specific actions has the institution undertaken to address the equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) challenges facing the technical community, including the low numbers of technicians from Black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds and the lack of women in technical leadership roles.

  S4 To what extent has the institution ensured career pathways include both vocational and academic entry routes?

  S5 How does the institution maintain partnerships with organisations and initiatives that provide technical and vocational training to ensure knowledge and skills sharing, facilitate the identification of skills needed for emerging technologies, and to inform the development of suitable future training?

  Each of these is scored out of five giving a total score for Sustainability out of 25

  The four scores for each of the pillars could be totalled up to give an overall TC Index classification

Technician Commitment Index: The Output

The University of Nowhere Whatsoever would be:

Embedded in Visibility   **Embryonic** in Recognition

Embryonic in Career Development   **Emerging** in Sustainability

Potentially........
With an Overall TC Classification of Emerging

TC Index: The Process

- Build on the existing Peer Review Process to minimise impact (workload)
  - On Signatories, TCHQ and critically the peer review community
- Scoring by a specially trained subset of the Peer Review community (oversight by TCHQ)
  - Training by the Learning Academy of the ITSS
  - Cocreate guidance for scoring each of the 20 criteria as part of that training
  - Revise the self-assessment forms to include the scoring element
- We will be open and transparent with the community on the criteria being assessed
  - Meaning we will share all the agreed criteria and the reviewer guidance
- Reminder: the sharing of the classification is optional
- We will pilot this before it is rolled out across the community
  - We will learn the lessons of that pilot scheme

TC Index: The Timelines

- The proposed timeline for delivery is:
  - Presentation of draft proposal to Technician Commitment Steering Board (09/24)
  - Presentation of draft proposal to ITSS Technical Council (09/24)
  - Presentation of draft proposal to ITSS Advisory Board (10/24)
  - Presentation of draft proposal to technical community (TC Signatory Event) (11/24)
  - Identification of pilot institutions (Early 2025)
  - Pilot scheme run (Spring/early summer 2025)
  - Criteria and process refined (Summer/autumn 2025)
  - Socialisation of final TC Index with the community (Autumn/winter 2025)
  - First formal run of TC Index (January 2026)
- This is still a proposal, so all the above is subject to change

TC Index: Workshop

TC Index: Workshop Activity One, of two just FYI!

- 20 minutes on this

  - ***Do the assessment criteria ask the right questions to gauge an institutions progress?***

    - Visibility   Tables 1, 5, 9, 13
    - Recognition   Tables 2, 6, 10, 14
    - Career Development Tables 3, 7, 11, 15
    - Sustainability   Tables 4, 8, 12, 16

If you complete your question analysis then please feel free to move on to the next pillar

- Handouts of all questions on the tables for your reference
- Please write feedback (positive or negative, sorry, developmental) on post it notes
  - *Note the question number (V1, R3, CD4 S5 etc on the posit it note)*
  - *Feel free to feedback where it is a great question!*
- Combined view of the table would be ideal, but individual is also appreciated

The flip chart paper and post it notes will be available over (most of) lunch so those who have strong feelings on a particular theme who did not get allocated can contribute

TC Index: Workshop Activity Two

- 10 minutes on this

  - ***Open Feedback!*** *Dangerous I know but we want to pick the collective brains on this as we need to get it right first time*

- Having said open we specifically want feedback (yes or no!) on whether you would like an overall Technician Commitment Index classification for each institution?

  - *The University of Nowhere Whatsoever will have a TC Index of emerging*

    Whilst it ticks the simplicity box just remember OFSTED classifications: does it oversimplify what is a nuanced picture for a complex organisation?

- Suggestions for other considerations to comment on   ***Do you support the TC Index? (Y/N)***

  - *Do we limit submissions: word or page count per section/overall?*

  - *Size of pilot: how do we identify those to pilot with? Volunteers? Need to cover all types of signatories?*

  - *Timelines for delivery? What are the unintended consequences? Will technicians welcome this?*

  - *Will this approach work for all sizes/types of institutions? What happens if we do not do this?*

  - *Can institutions opt out of particular questions and their score not be averaged on that?*

  - *With training and guidance would you/your institution be able to support a scoring peer review evaluation?*

TC Index

Feedback
12:45-13:00

Lunch

13:00-14:00

TSN ROKS update and new ITSS Networks (ESN and EDIN)

14:00-14:30

The ITSS Networks

The Technical Equality Diversity and Inclusion Network (TEDIN) builds on the work of the National EDI Network for Technicians.

TEDIN will provide the link between ITSS and other strategic bodies with the technical workforce to ensure effective communication and representation of those impacted by EDI concerns.

Two forms of membership:
- Committee
- Wider network membership

Committee has call for 12 members out now :
- 2 EDI professionals
- 2 HR professionals
- 2 strategic technical leaders
- 6 technical colleagues from underrepresented groups

Close date 2nd December:
https://forms.office.com/e/DK5xfvVEVm

The ITSS Environmental Sustainability Network (ESN) builds on the work of the MI Environmental Sustainability Technicians Group.

ESN will provide advice and oversight to strategy and research development involving environmental sustainability, communicate opportunities and highlight initiatives developed by technicians.

Two forms of membership:
- Committee
- Wider network membership

Committee will have membership representing:
- Institutional Sustainability Representatives
- Funding bodies
- Professional bodies
- Related networks
- 6 technical colleagues from a range of locations

Strategic Technical Leaders Network

Network membership: the STLN was launched in February 2024 for the alumni of the Executive Programme in Strategic Technical Leadership and those currently operating in strategic technical leadership roles at an institutional level.

Network purpose: to promote the role of the strategic technical leader across higher education and research institutions and provide a confidential and supportive environment in which network members can:

- share best practice and problem solve,
- discuss and input to relevant hot topics,
- share learning opportunities and tackle challenges.

How it works: the STLN aims and mode of operation are defined within the STLN charter, membership is voluntary. The network aim to meet 2-3 times per year with at least 2 in person meetings.

About the Technology Specialists Network

- Established late 2022

- Grown to nearly 450 members

- Covers all disciplines

- Two annual conferences to date, covering topics such as:
  - Funders and personal grant experiences
  - Facility finances
  - Careers and promotional pathways
  - Facility management
  - Hot topic discussions

EPSRC: Strategic Technical Platforms Call

"The STP investment is aligned with UKRI's Research England funded TALENT programme and the UK Institute for Technical Skills and Strategy (ITSS), which have gathered new strategic insights into the UK's technical workforce in higher education and research."

www.ukri.org/news/new-funding-to-support-research-technical-professionals/

Strategic Technical Platforms – Full proposals

Opportunity status:	Closed
Funders:	Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC)
Funding type:	Grant
Total fund:	£6,500,000
Award range:	£750,000 - £2,000,000
Publication date:	20 July 2023
Opening date:	20 July 2023 9:00am UK time
Closing date:	12 October 2023 4:00pm UK time

This funding opportunity supports Research Technical Professional (RTP) groups in the UK. This funding opportunity is for full proposals and applications are invitation only.

You must be based at a UK research organisation eligible for EPSRC funding. RTPs may apply as project lead or project co-lead.

Timeline

20 July 2023 9:00am
Opening date

12 October 2023 4:00pm
Closing date

November 2023
Interview panel

December 2023
Funding decision

1 April 2024
Award start

Brought together a team

Ralph Adams
University of Manchester

Ian Hancox
University of Warwick

Julie Herniman
University of Southampton

Natalie Homer
University of Edinburgh

Alex Sossick
Natural History Museum

Chris Waldron
University of Warwick

Anneke Lubben
University of Bath

Andrew Filby
University of Newcastle

Shonna Johnston
University of Edinburgh

Lee Murphy
University of Edinburgh

Peter O'Toole
University of York

Sarah Bennett
University of Warwick

David Leadley
University of Warwick

TSN: RTP Opportunities, Knowledge & Skills (ROKS)

- Complementary activities to existing opportunities such as those from ITSS, not duplication.

- Help develop the Research Technical Professional (RTP) pipeline.

- Help upskill, provide opportunities to and enable sharing of best practice across RTP community.

- Increase the visibility of RTPs and their facilities/capabilities.

3 Key Themes

WP1: Developing pipelines and promoting RTP careers

WP2: Skill sessions and opportunities for RTPs

WP3: Visibility and knowledge exchange

Cross cutting:

Accessibility and inclusivity

- Cover travel, accommodation and carer costs
- Advertise opportunities through a wide range of networks
- Fair and open application process for opportunities with careful panel selection

Dissemination

- Case studies, sharing of best practice across networks and sustainability of activities

WP1: Developing pipelines and promoting RTP careers

- Three activities that target a different level of entry to the RTP talent pipeline.

Outreach demonstrator fund

Undergraduate summer placements

Engagement of Centres of Doctoral Training (CDTs)

Outreach Demonstrator Fund

- RTPs can apply for up to £6000 to create hands-on outreach demonstrator units
  - Showcase science, technology or aspect of RTP role
- Aim to fund at least 10 projects per call, 3 calls across the 3 years
- Application process is competitive – develops professional skills of the RTP in areas such as communication, project management and developing funding proposals

- Applications judged by a carefully selected panel
- 8 months to spend funds with a further 4 months to complete activities
- 2 interim progress checks and a final report
- Developing materials and connections to support RTPs in outreach

WP2: Skill sessions and opportunities for RTPs

Three distinct but linked activities for RTPs within EPSRC remit to develop knowledge, increase skills and build confidence to compete in funding calls. The selection of activities was based on feedback from our TSN event.

Facility finances and instrument costing
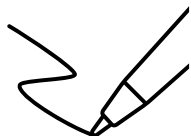
Proposal support residentials
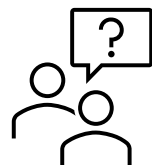
Demand driven training

Proposal Support Residentials

- Immersive 4-day residentials to support RTPs with successful grant writing
- Cover whole grant process from funder guidelines, writing process, financial aspects, mock panels to project management
- Interactive and supportive – 20 delegates
- Initial to be held at Warwick January 2025
- 2 in-person events
- Potential for short course style online delivery of sessions
- Selective event, free to attend for participants

WP3: Visibility and knowledge exchange

Three activities which provide opportunities for knowledge exchange and sharing best practise both between RTP communities and with the research community.
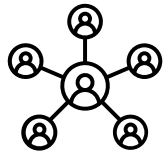
Peer-to-Peer facility days

International conference fund
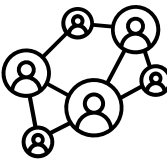
Effective equipment sharing

Peer to Peer Facility Days

- Facilities within EPSRC remit can apply for funding to host a facility day - £1500 to cover hosting costs and £4000 to cover delegates travel and accommodation.
- There will be one call per year and 6 facility days funded per call.
- Each facility day will include:
  - Symposium
  - Tour of facilities
  - Networking opportunities
- Selective application process including outline agenda, symposium details and budget breakdown.
- Host institution will arrange advertising the facility day and registering delegates.
- Evaluation – host institutions responsible for gathering evaluation from delegates and must produce a post-event evaluation report

Effective Equipment Sharing

- This expands on Technician Led Equipment Sharing from TALENT, partnering with N8, GW4 and SES to take it to a national scale.

- Capabilities showcase live on ITSS site, 113 entries UK wide since launch in September.

- Funds to pump prime new relationships across ITSS (national) and TSN ROKS (regional).

How to get involved

Join TSN:
Website: https://itss.org.uk/tsn/
JISC email: JISCMail - Subscribe or Unsubscribe to the TSN List

Twitter/X:
@UKTSNetwork

Opportunities to start launching soon!
Includes open calls and panel representation – join the JISC email and ITSS newsletter for information.

One of our supporter networks

TMU Annual Conference 2025 - University of Winchester
10th – 11th April
https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/tmu-annual-conference-2025-tickets-1073148910279

Visit

www.itss.org.uk | www.techniciancommitment.org.uk

Contact

enquiries@itss.org.uk | tc@itss.org.uk

Connect

linkedin.com/company/uk-itss
linkedin.com/company/technician-commitment

@uk_itss
@TechsCommit

https://www.youtube.com/@UK-ITSS

technician_commitment

Regional/Discipline Networks

14:30-15:00

The Power of Networking

- New opportunities
- Different perspective
- Knowledge sharing
- Access to resources
- Support
- Increased visibility
- Recognition

Technician Commitment is a supportive community

Flash talks from our Technician networks

Northern Ireland
- Gillian Riddell/Heather Burgess

London and South-East
- Karen Henderson

Research Institute Technician Group
- Amelia Kowalewska

Welsh Network
- Mark Dabee Saltmarsh

Scottish Network
- Mohammad Ali Salik

NIUTN Purpose

- Collaboration & Networking

- Conferences, Workshops, Outreach

- Professional Development

- Recognition for Research & Education

- Network for Technical colleagues at Ulster and Queen's Universities

Highlights

- **Technician Commitment Networking event, QUB November 2023**
- **UU/QUB Steering Group Away Day**
- **Technician Showcase, QUB May 2024**
- **NIUTN Joint Committee planning meetings, MSTeams**

The Future

- NIUTN Christmas event, UU December 2024

- "Technician Tours" of two universities

- School Engagement event, April 2025

- Workshops for Professional Registration/Advance HE accreditation

- Expand network to NI FE colleges and Teaching Colleges

- QUB/UU support for All-Ireland Technical Staff Network (AITSN)

London and South-East Regional Network

Technician **Commitment**

London and South-East Regional Network

VISIBILITY

Ensure that all technicians within the organisation are identifiable and that the contribution of technicians is visible within and beyond the institution

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Enable career progression opportunities for technicians through the provision of clear, documented career pathways

RECOGNITION

Support technicians to gain recognition through professional registration and external awards schemes

SUSTAINABILITY

Ensure the future sustainability of technical skills across the organisation and that technical expertise is fully utilised

2024

- **Apprentice Network Event** at the National Oceanography Centre. Supported by Technician Commitment Collaboration Fund.

- **Natural History Museum Event**

Technician Commitment

VISIBILITY

Ensure that all technicians within the organisation are identifiable and that the contribution of technicians is visible within and beyond the institution

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Enable career progression opportunities for technicians through the provision of clear, documented career pathways

RECOGNITION

Support technicians to gain recognition through professional registration and external awards schemes

SUSTAINABILITY

Ensure the future sustainability of technical skills across the organisation and that technical expertise is fully utilised

The Power of Networks

'…enables us to connect and troubleshoot issues together. It's also enabled us to benchmark against other institutions' strategies to present to executives to push forward.'

'I love the informality of it….there's no pressure.'

'Collaborating with each other a events….a great space to centralise all the events that are available too.'

'Just knowing that other institutions may be encountering the same challenges is comforting and hearing other viewpoints and approaches to those challenges is really beneficial.'

'…opportunities to share knowledge and experience, informs our understanding of how TC is being implemented at different institutes and gives a sense of belonging.'

'As we are at the early stages in terms of our journey with TC, the network is like having a mentor, a wealth of information and experience to tap into.'

'I just started as the Technician Commitment lead a year ago and having the possibility for exchanging ideas, asking questions and listening in to what is discussed was great to provide me with more confidence and knowledge. '

'…been a fantastic way to share approaches and learning with partners in the region.'

Research Institute Technician Group (RITG)

Formed to achieve effective collaborations between signatory Institutes

Highlights

- Established in 2019

- Monthly meetings

- 11 Institutes as of October 2024

- Knowledge sharing

- Open up online events to the group (most recently, the Norwich Bioscience Institutes Accessible Science Talks day in October)

- Partnering in separate initiatives

- Held 3 in-person symposiums

- Biennial Research Institute Technician Awards for visibility and recognition

RITG

Going forward

- Expanding the group in the first quarter of 2025

- Looking into running online seminars

- Hosting the RIT Awards (Autumn 2025)

ALL WALES TECHNICAL CONFERENCE 2025

- Collaboration of all 8 Welsh Universities

- Cardiff University, Cardiff Metropolitan University, Swansea University, University of Wales Trinity St David, University of South Wales, Aberystwyth University, Bangor University and Wrexham University.

- Initially connections were made through the Wales Innovation Network.

- Expecting 200 technical staff to attend in Cardiff June 2025.

STN
Scottish Technician Network

Ali Salik
Technician Commitment Coordinator
University of Glasgow
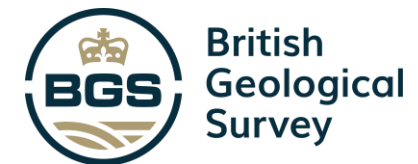
STN Structure and Aims

- Launched in July 2014, all Scottish University & Research Institutions invited to join the network that meets every 2 months.

- Encourage and enable local networks and events, as well as specialist/thematic networks and events.

- Signpost opportunities, making and supporting connections, trying to ensure equitable opportunity for all technical specialisms.

- A platform to share best practice, lessons learned and ideas.

- A collaborated approach to shared challenges, where possible / achievable.

Challenges & Opportunities
Ongoing/Upcoming Actions

- Institutions are spread across Scotland making large / central events difficult for many to attend.

- Non-standardised job descriptions in many institutions.

- Opportunity to introduce a more formal structure within STN with focused workstreams accompanied by terms of reference.

- Encouraging/supporting funding applications made to UKTSN ROKS (Technology Specialists Network: Research Technical Professional Opportunities, Knowledge and Skills).

- Glasgow-Edinburgh-St Andrews RTPs collaborating on the funding applications to the InFrame project Research Culture Catalyst Fund (An inclusive framework for research leadership: testing a new model for creating culture change).

- Scottish Technical Conference June 2025 (details tbc)

Questions?
Get in touch!

- Ali Salik

Technician Commitment Coordinator, University of Glasgow

MohammadAli.Salik@glasgow.ac.uk

- Sally Morgan

Chair of Technician Steering Committee, University of Edinburgh

Sally.Morgan@ed.ac.uk

Next steps

Identify current TC networks

- Geographical or 'special interest'
- Who are the members?
- Point of contact?

Identify any gaps/overlaps

Match Signatories to networks

Technician Commitment team to Champion networks

We need your help!

Networks Roundtable

15:00-15:15

Coffee and refreshments

15:15-15:45

Strategic Technical Leaders Report

15:45-16:15

Strategic Technical Leadership: Advocacy, Empowerment and Transformation

Catrin Harris

Report *Strategic Technical Leadership: Advocacy, Empowerment and Transformation*

Published 19 November 2024

31 interviews with strategic technical leaders and other senior leaders

6 recommendations

Key themes

Definitions of strategic technical leadership

Strategic technical leadership roles

Creating the roles

Support and development

Benefits

Definitions of strategic technical leadership
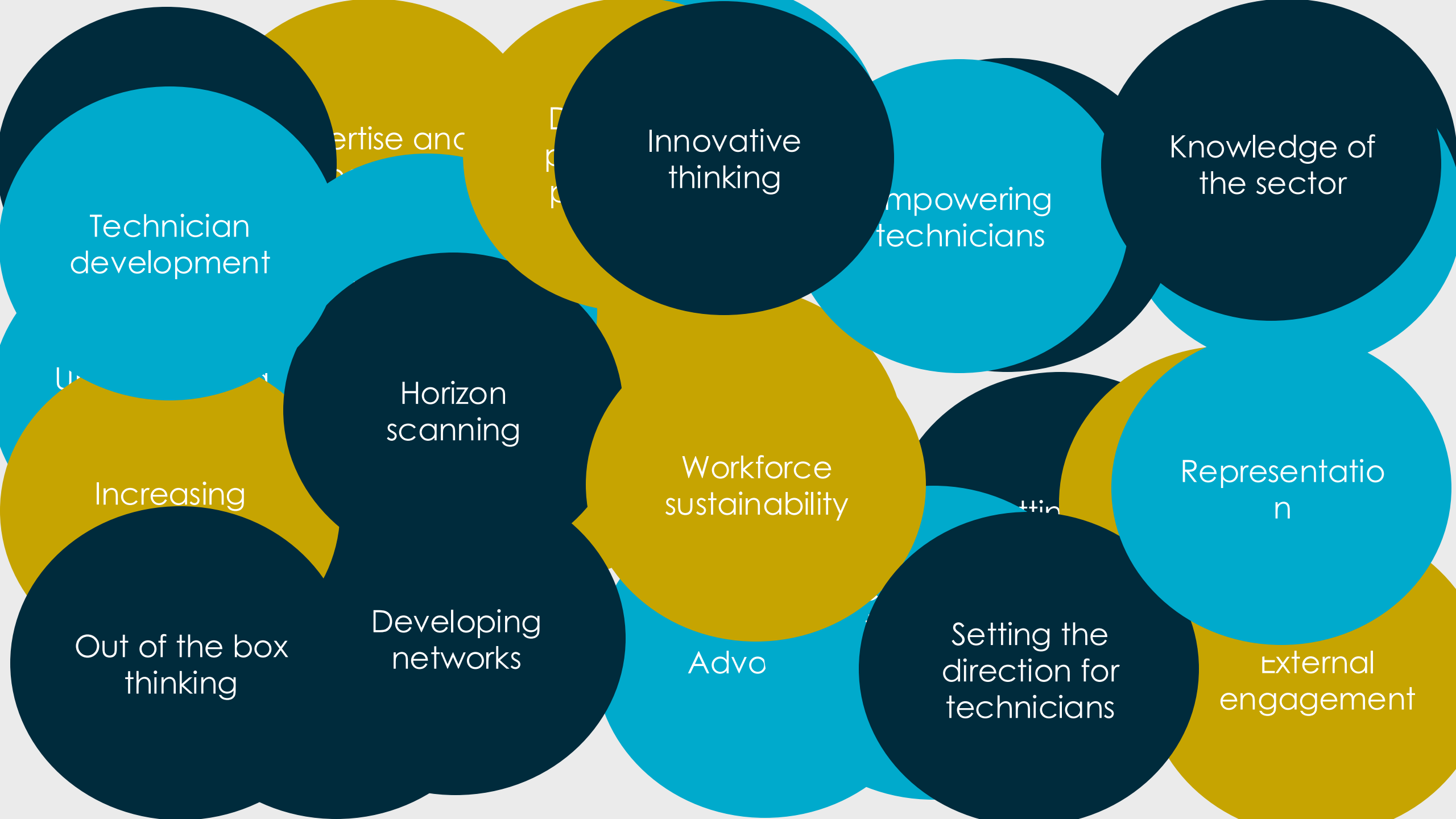
A strategic technical leader is an empowered decision-maker who aligns the technical workforce with the institution's long-term goals by anticipating future needs, advocating for technicians, and shaping policies that impact both technical staff and the broader organisation. They play a key role in strategic planning, particularly in areas like workforce sustainability, skills development, and investment in technical resources, while ensuring technicians have appropriate development opportunities.

Strategic technical leadership roles in action

Nature of the roles

Consistency

Level

Dual, split and informal roles

Operational responsibilities

Key responsibilities

Strategy and policy

Advocacy and representation

The Technician Commitment

Overview of the technical workforce

External engagement

HR and people management

Facilities and equipment

Creating strategic technical leadership roles
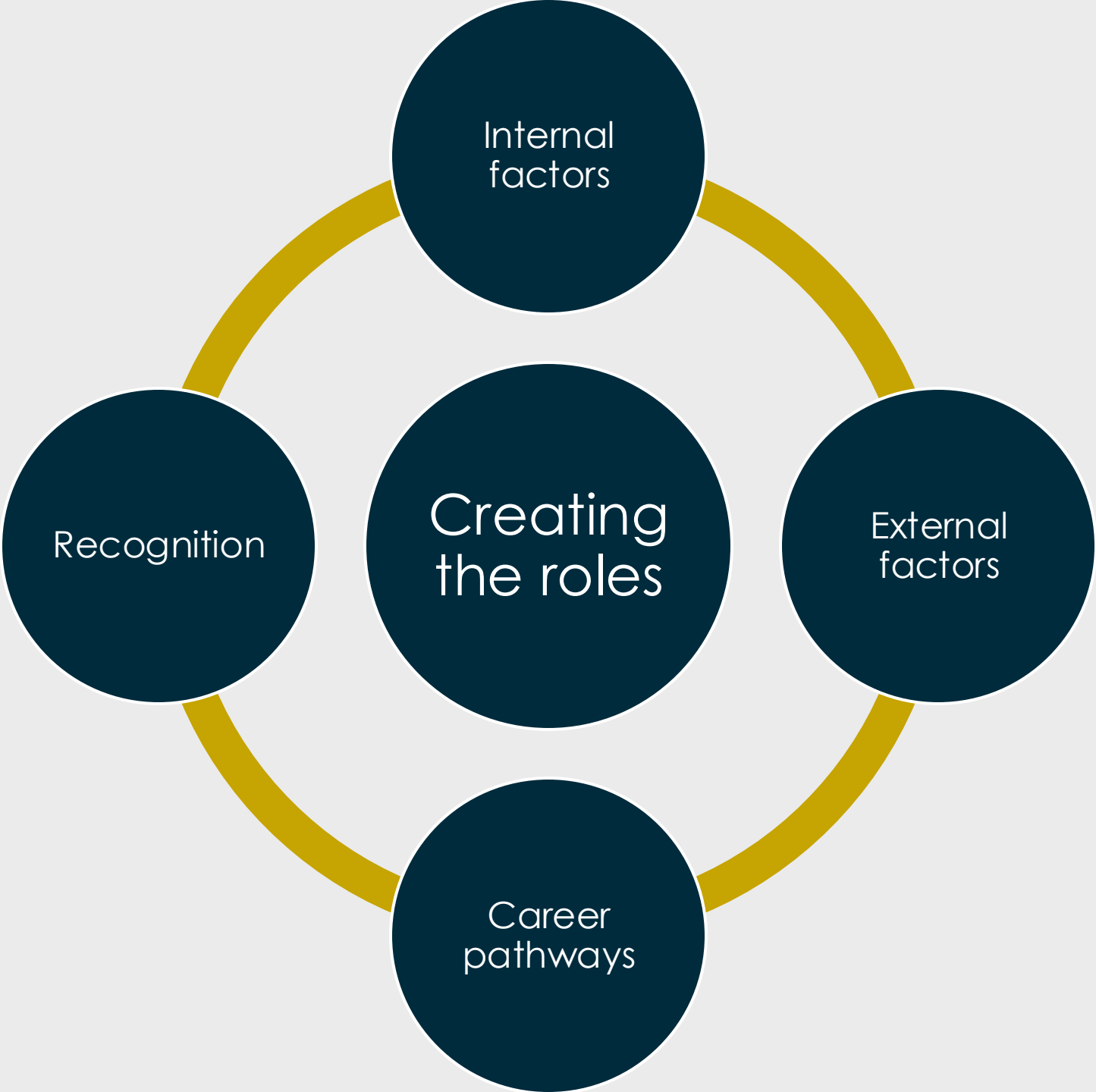
Creating the roles

Advocates for the roles

- The importance of senior leadership

Recruitment

- Internal vs external
- Institutional reorganisation
- Regrading

Challenges

- Recognition and value
- Financial
- Structure of university

Supporting and developing strategic technical leaders

Benefits of strategic technical leadership roles

Recommendations

Institutions should appoint a strategic lead for technical staff and skills in the organisation to lead the strategy for technicians in collaboration with technical managers and senior leaders.

Strategic technical leaders should be included in institutional fora and decision-making committees.

Senior leaders should engage with, support and empower strategic technical leaders.

Strategic technical leaders should be given professional development opportunities, including mentoring and coaching from senior leadership.

Strategic technical leaders should oversee a portfolio of key areas that enables them to fully use their knowledge and expertise to advance the institution's strategy.

Strategic technical leads should be given time, support and opportunities to develop their external networks and influence sector change for technicians.

REF Update from

Duncan Shermer

Head of REF Evaluation and Development

16:15-16.45

REF and FRAP (Future Research Assessment Programme)

- REF is a significant policy instrument driving research excellence across the UK

- REF informs allocation of around £2bn of block-grant funding each year and provides accountability for this public investment

- Development between exercises is necessary to reflect the changing research landscape

- The four UK higher education funding bodies launched the FRAP to inform the development of the next REF

- The funding bodies published initial decisions on high-level design of REF 2029 and issues for further consultation

REF 2029
Research Excellence Framework

The funding bodies have agreed a vision for a future research system

A future assessment exercise should seek to underpin:

- A system that produces **high-quality**, **rigorous** research that is **open** to all

- An **inclusive** and **collaborative** system that supports a **diversity** of people, institutions, ideas, methodologies, outputs, activities

- An **engaged** and **impactful** system that connects research with wide society to bring about positive socio-economic change

REF 2029
Research Excellence Framework

Initial decisions on REF 2029 (June 2023)

- REF 2029 has an expanded definition of research excellence. The three elements have been refocussed and rebalanced to reflect this:
  - **People, culture and environment** (PCE) replaces the environment element and will be expanded to include research culture
  - **Contribution to knowledge and understanding** replaces the outputs element. It will largely be based on assessment of research outputs, but will also include evidence of broader contributions to the advancement of the discipline
  - **Engagement and impact** replaces the impact element. It is similar to the impact element of REF 2014 and will consist of impact case studies and an accompanying statement
- REF 2029 will move further away from the assessment of individuals. Research volume will be determined by data drawn directly from the existing HESA staff record.
- To increase inclusivity in REF 2029 there will be no minimum of maximum number of outputs contributed by an individual.

REF 2029

Research Excellence Framework

REF 2029 has a revised and rebalanced definition of research excellence

People, culture and environment	Contribution to knowledge and understanding	Engagement and impact
• Institution-level and disciplinary-level evidence statements	• Research outputs (2.5x volume) • Disciplinary-level evidence statement	• Impact case study/ies • Disciplinary-level evidence statement
25%	**50%**	**25%**

REF 2029
Research Excellence Framework

REF 2029 will be conducted at the level of whole institutions and disciplinary groupings within institutions

Staff on T&R and R-only contracts with significant responsibility for research

Staff on T&R and R-only contracts without significant responsibility for research

All other researchers and research-enabling staff
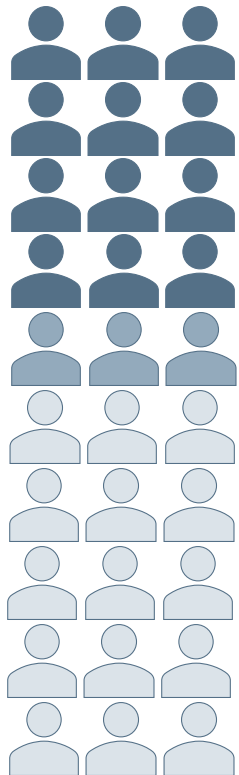
Conduct research in a UoA

- Numbers (FTE) contribute to volume measure
- Data drawn directly from HESA (with some additional fields)
- Volume calculated as a multi-year average
- No list of 'submitted staff'

- All staff with substantial link to the institution eligible to contribute to assessed outputs and impact case studies
- No minimum or maximum requirements

REF 2029
Research Excellence Framework

REF 2029 will…

- Move away from assessing individuals and towards assessing **institutions**, **disciplinary groupings** and **teams**

- Encourage **broader contributions** to research and research processes

- Place appropriate focus on research **culture and environment**

- Reduce the focus on research outputs as the sole means to demonstrate excellence

REF 2029
Research Excellence Framework

REF Update (November and December 2023)

- Consultation with the sector on the initial decisions
- Analysis of the feedback received from this consultation
- Comments sought specifically on the assessment of PCE
- Tendering and commissioning of PCE indicators project
- An extension to the timing with the next REF in 2029, in recognition of complexities in:
  - Preparation for use of HESA data to determine REF volume measures
  - Breaking the link between individual staff and institutional submissions
  - Reworking of institutional Codes of Practice
- This has provided an opportunity for further work on PCE and scope for piloting of PCE assessment ahead of the 2029 exercise

REF2029
Research Excellence Framework

PCE Updates (January and March 2024)

- The PCE Indicators project was commissioned with Technopolis and CRAC-Vitae which will develop the indicators to be used for the assessment of PCE.

- Given the extended timeframe of the REF to 2029, an opportunity emerged for more in-depth testing of the indicators developed through the commissioned PCE indicators project.

- A pilot exercise was announced which involves drafting of example PCE submissions by a sample of HEIs for assessment by pilot panels in a selected number of Units of Assessment (UoAs).

- The pilot will utilise the outputs of the commissioned project, the selected indicators and the draft submission/assessment template.

PCE Indicators Project

Phase I

- Desk research to understand existing landscape on research culture and possible indicators (February 2024)

- Consultation with the sector to co-design indicators and templates for submission and assessment
    - Scoping workshops (May to June 2024)
    - Thematic workshops (July to September 2024)

- Consultation with Pilot panels (September 2024)

- Indicators and templates for Pilot assessment produced (October 2024)

REF2029
Research Excellence Framework

PCE Indicators Project

Thematic workshops

- Research governance
- People and talent
- Integrity and the research process
- Openness and collaboration
- Employment and recognition
- Professional and career development
- Equality, diversity and inclusion
- Collegiality and belonging

PCE Indicators Project

Phase II (October 2024 onwards)

- Testing of templates and indicators with wider community (in parallel with the pilot assessment):
  - Online consultation
  - Community workshops
  - Follow-up with the Pilot Panels

- Debrief community following pilot results

- Final Report

PCE pilot exercise

- The pilot will incorporate the production and assessment of PCE statements from a sample of HEIs, within a selection of Units of Assessment (UoAs) which will be assessed by pilot assessment panels

- It is necessary to focus our pilot to strike a balance between:
    - manageable amount of work to be delivered
    - sufficient evidence for a meaningful assessment

- A key concern with the pilot is that the sample of material produced and outcomes of the assessment can be considered representative of the broader research landscape

- The main output is a realistic assessment of the feasibility of carrying out assessment of PCE in a 'full-scale' REF exercise

REF2029

Research Excellence Framework

UoA selection (March 2024)

8 UoAs have been identified for the pilot exercise

- Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy (UoA 3)
- Biological Sciences (UoA 5)
- Earth Systems and Environmental Science (UoA 7)
- Computer Science and Informatics (UoA 11)
- Business and Management Studies (UoA 17)
- Social Work and Social Policy (UoA 20)
- History (UoA 28)
- Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies (UoA 33)

REF 2029
Research Excellence Framework

UoA selection (March 2024)

Rationale for selection of UoAs:

- Interesting UoAs to explore, including those with particular issues or conditions with PCE or with possible indicators. For example:
  - UoAs where specialist institutions are represented
  - UoAs which include practice-based research
  - UoAs with non-traditional outputs

- Ensure that there is sufficient material to assess.

- UoAs which are representative of the broader research landscape.

REF 2029
Research Excellence Framework

HEI selection (April to May 2024)

A range of HEIs to provide representation

- A mixture of research-intensive institutions and those with more of a teaching focus.

- A mixture of small and specialist institutions and large multi-faculty institutions.

- A breadth of UoA coverage

- HEIs preparing submissions (December 2024 to March 2025)

REF2029
Research Excellence Framework

Panel Member recruitment (May to June 2024)

- 8 Subject panels in the selected UoAs – Composed of approx. 20 panel members, including two Co-chairs

- 1 Institution level panel – Composed of the Co-chairs of the subject panels, plus some additional members

- Broad range of expertise. Panels should comprise the following experience and expertise:
  - Experience of research assessment, e.g. served on a REF panel or other national assessment exercise
  - Experience of research submissions, e.g. coordinated an institutional or unit-level submission for the REF 2021 exercise
  - General expertise in PCE, e.g. has an institutional role focusing on a field related to research culture, or involved in other groups or organisations with an active interest in PCE

REF2029
Research Excellence Framework

Some thoughts…

- Research culture is difficult to define, and therefore may be difficult to measure or assess.

- Royal Society: "Research culture encompasses the behaviours, values, expectations, attitudes and norms of our research communities. It influences researchers' career paths and determines the way that research is conducted and communicated."

https://royalsociety.org/news-resources/projects/research-culture/

- Research culture framework. Behaviours and values that underpin:
  - how research is managed and undertaken
  - how research ensures value
  - how people are supported
  - how individuals engage with others

https://www.ukri.org/publications/research-initiatives-in-the-uk-report/research-culture-initiatives-in-the-uk-report/

REF 2029
Research Excellence Framework

Research culture framework

How research is managed and undertaken
· Effective research governance and management
· Achieving the highest levels of research integrity
· Actively promoting sustainability

How people are supported
· Employment and conditions
· Recognition and assessment
· Embedding professional and career development
· Ensuring inclusive and healthy working environments

How research ensures value
· Taking an open approach to research
· Communicating research
· Realising impact

How individuals engage with others
· Providing effective leadership and management
· Empowering individuals
· Building collegiality

Adapted from Shift Insight, Vitae and UKRN, Research Culture Initiatives in the UK (2023), commissioned by UK Research and Innovation, and used under CC BY 4.0.

vitae
realising the potential of researchers

https://www.vitae.ac.uk/impact-and-evaluation/research-culture-framework

REF 2029
Research Excellence Framework

Our approach will need to consider…

- The **People** delivering the research
  - There needs to be recognition and support for all involved

- The research and impact process and the **Culture** behind it
  - This needs to be open, rigorous, ethical, collaborative, team-oriented, interdisciplinary

- The infrastructure and facilities that comprise the research **Environment**
  - These aspects of the research system have been assessed in previous REF exercises, and continue to be important

REF 2029
Research Excellence Framework

Our approach will need to consider…

- **<u>Flexibility</u>**: Different approaches and indicators may be necessary for different types of higher-education institutions, different research strategies, or different research disciplines

- **<u>Journey travelled</u>**: Not every institution will start from the same place or has the same resources. We will need to consider what has been achieved with what resource, and progress that has been made.

- **<u>Context</u>**: Indicators are of limited value if we do not understand the context or the narrative behind them. We need space in the assessment to contextualise the indicators.

REF 2029
Research Excellence Framework

Objectives

- We want to develop an assessment exercise that will underpin:
  - a research system that produces high-quality, rigorous research that is open to all
  - an inclusive and collaborative research system that supports a diversity of people, ideas, institutions, methodologies, outputs, and activities
  - an engaged and impactful research system that connects research with wider society to bring about positive socio-economic change
- We want to shine a light on research culture, to not just assess research culture, but identify and reward healthy research culture, and therefore to drive it in a positive direction. Our hope is that this will have a positive impact on research culture and the people doing research.

REF 2029
Research Excellence Framework

Closing Remarks

16.45 -17.00

Date for your diaries

TC Signatory and Supporter event
14 May 2025

Belfast

That concludes the agenda for the day. Safe travels to those leaving us.

For those able to stay, please return to the venue for 6pm start
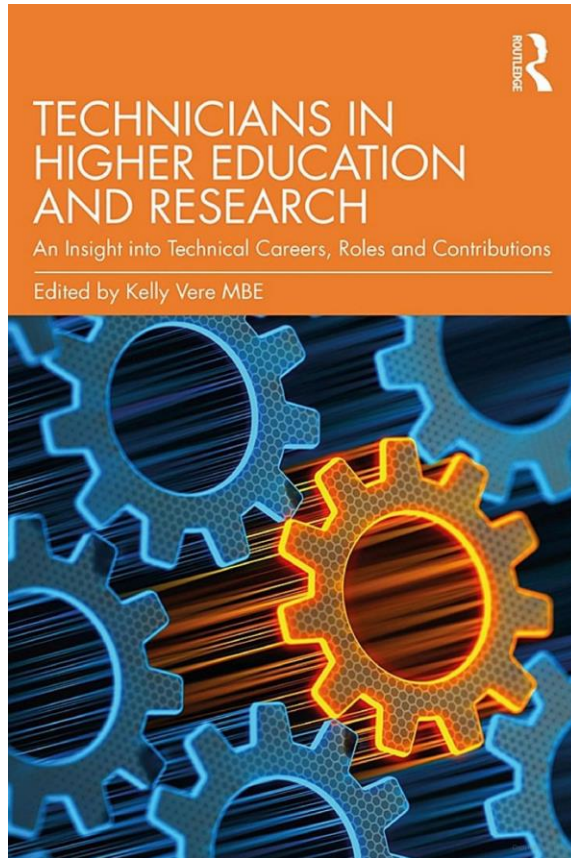
Evening drinks and networking reception

Clare Viney, Chair, Technician Commitment Steering

Clare has been an active member of the Technician Commitment Steering Board since 2017 and is a Chartered Scientist and Chemist, with extensive experience in the science community and not-for-profit sector.

She is the Chief Executive Officer of CRAC/Vitae, a registered UK charity dedicated to supporting career development and active, career-related learning.

Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser
Chief Executive, UK Research and Innovation and Regius Professor of Botany, University of Cambridge

'This book provides a unique window on the technical workforce in our HEIs and RIOs, celebrating their diversity and their many contributions to the success of research and innovation, and in the economy and our public services. I hope that the inspiring content in this book will shine a light on the fantastic range of technical careers available in the research and innovation system.'

Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser

TECHNICIANS IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

An Insight into Technical Careers, Roles and Contributions

Edited by Kelly Vere MBE

Technicians in Higher Education and Research
An Insight into Technical Careers, Roles and Contributions

Edited By **Kelly Vere**

Dedicated to the technical talent underpinning research, teaching and innovation within universities and research institutes, this book highlights the vital contributions of technicians to the higher education and research sector.

Exploring the varied definitions of the technical role and recent developments in the professional landscape, this book brings together a diverse set of contributors who each discuss their unique, first-hand and authentic perspectives on this crucial community. Initial chapters cover the varied definitions of the technical role, explore the current demographics of this workforce and provide a history of the origins of the profession. The book continues to explore broad themes that are key components of the roles of the modern-day technician including teaching, research, leading core facilities, health and safety, procurement, environmental sustainability and research culture. It concludes by looking to the future and explores recent developments in the landscape for the technical community and the work underway to engage the public with technical roles and careers, challenging perceptions and stereotypes about the roles of technicians.

Written in an accessible style, this essential volume shines a light on this understudied group to raise the profile of technical careers, roles and contributions, and to ensure sector-wide insights into this invisible workforce. It is a must-read for aspiring and current technicians across all disciplines, education and research leaders, managers and policymakers.

'This book provides a unique window on the technical workforce in our HEIs and RIOs, celebrating their diversity and their many contributions to the success of research and innovation, and in the economy and our public services. I hope that the inspiring content in this book will shine a light on the fantastic range of technical careers available in the research and innovation system.'

- **Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser,** Chief Executive, UK Research and Innovation and Regius Professor of Botany, University of Cambridge, UK.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Awards

Liverpool John Moores University

Lancaster University

University of Sussex

University of Derby

Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine

Babraham Institute

Oxford Brookes University

University of Sheffield

Queen's University Belfast

University of Bristol

Nottingham Trent University

Manchester Metropolitan University

The Open University

University of Essex

Aston University

University of Hertfordshire

University of Chester

University of Strathclyde

De Montfort University

Cardiff University

University of Leeds

UWE Bristol

University of Liverpool

University of Edinburgh

University of Birmingham

The Francis Crick Institute

University of St Andrews

University for the Creative Arts

Loughborough University

Royal Holloway, University of London

University of Nottingham

From May

University of Cambridge

Anglia Ruskin University

Buckinghamshire New University

The Institute of Cancer Research

Thank you and safe onward journey

Event close