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.vere@sciencecouncil.org or tracey.dickens@gatsby.org.uk.

Technician Commitment

Evaluating Impact through Self-Assessment & Future Action Planning

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

The University of Strathclyde is a leading international technological university located in the centre of Glasgow, Scotland's largest city, we are home to students from over 100 countries. The University of Strathclyde is a values led institution, our key values being: ambitious, bold, collaborative, innovative and people-oriented. We are a research led institution with approximately 22,000 students and 3500 staff. The University has 4 Faculties: Science, Engineering, Strathclyde Business School and Humanities and Social Sciences. By income, we are the third largest University in Scotland, and within the thirty largest UK wide.

We are winners of seven Times Higher Education Awards, including University of the Year 2012 and Business School of the Year 2016, we have a world-wide reputation for teaching and research excellence. We are also five-star overall rating in the QS Stars University Ratings, and The University of Strathclyde is in the UK's top 20 universities according to the Times Higher Educations analysis of REF 2014. In 2017 the University earned the title of Workplace of the Year from the Times Higher Education Awards.

Please tell us how your organisation defines its technicians:

The University holds all staff information on our Oracle database system, which is operated by a dedicated team of staff based in our Human Resources department. As part of our career pathways in the University, all staff have access to job level descriptors which explains the work expectations and knowledge and understanding requirements of those working within the grades. This information also helps enable staff to plan for their future career progression and development.

The University has an accredited SVQ centre which deals with the recruitment and training of around 10/12 technical modern apprentices at any one time. Our main technical workforce are based across all 4 faculties (Science, Engineering, Humanities and Social Sciences, Strathclyde Business School) with the grade code of TS03 – TS08.

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):

**We have 187 staff who have are based across all 4 faculties. The breakdown of department and roles etc is being compiled by HR colleagues and will be available for our assessment in October.

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:

Visibility

Recognition for all staff through the Strathclyde Medals Awards which takes place every year. The medals are awarded to staff who have demonstrated our core values through their work. This reward and recognition initiative has been running since 2015.

Our values are:

Bold: confident and challenging about what we do, and supportive of appropriate and managed risk in our decision-making.

Collaborative: working together, internally and externally, with integrity and in an open, respectful way.

Innovative: focused on discovering and applying knowledge and impact, and encouraging creative thinking and new ideas.

People-orientated: committed to our staff and students, providing opportunities and investing in their development.

Ambitious: for our institution, staff and students as well as supporting the ambitions of our partners.

Supporting technical staff to attend cross University working groups and meetings

Technical staff section of the HR (Organisational and Staff Development Unit) web page

Direct mailing to Technical Staff around specific training such as HEaTED courses

We host regular HEaTED events for technical staff

On our web page we have case studies examples of career development of technical staff from across the University.

Technician engagement in re-grading grows year on year

We have a very successful Modern Apprenticeship programme.

Recognition

The University is the only Scottish University to hold Employer Champion status – this was celebrated by an Awards visit from the Science Council where the Dean of Science accepted the Award

The Organisational and Staff Development Unit support technical staff to attain professional registration from the Science Council. As part of this process, I host information sessions delivered by the Science Council. These information sessions are relevant to both our science and engineering technicians, and comprises of help and support to complete the application process.

Direct support from the Science Council with regular visits from the Science Council to help interested technical staff.

6-8 technical staff from the Science Faculty have successfully gained Professional Registration at various levels

In 2018 we have had 7 technical members of staff successfully gain Associate Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy. This achievement will celebrated at our Teaching and Learning Day, and will also be highlighted on our web page.

Several of our young technicians have been recognised through the Scottish Apprenticeship Awards

Development

Technical staff can attend the following programmes:

The Strathclyde Leadership Development Programme

The Strathclyde Leadership Development Programme consists of two independent modular programmes. The first programme, 1st Line Leadership, is designed to support new and aspiring Leaders, with the second programme, Leading for Strategic Outcomes, designed to support more experienced leaders wishing to build on their existing knowledge and experience. Participants on both programmes can choose to work towards an Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) qualification.

SPARK (Strathclyde Programme in Academic Practice, Researcher Development and Knowledge Exchange)

The SPARK programme is designed to provide staff from across each of the University's job families with flexible, individualised, and progressive routes for personal and professional development, leading to postgraduate certificate, diploma, and masters level awards. Beneath the SPARK umbrella four, innovative course pathways offer classes that are aligned to each of the following job families: Learning and Teaching Higher Education, Researcher Development, Knowledge Exchange and Academic Practice

Strathclyde Programme in Research and Leadership

The SPIRAL programme is designed to directly support and align with the strategic ambitions of the University. These ambitions demand big changes at the University such as research performance, increasing research income, growing our PGR population, building strong international links, building our collaborations with academic partners ,business, government and the third sector and increasing impact on society and economy. All of this requires the full support of academic staff, who themselves need support– including training and development – in meeting these objectives.

Strathclyde Teaching Excellence Programme

Strathclyde Teaching Excellence Programme (STEP) is designed to support development in teaching leadership areas. In addition to a regular programme of workshops and targeted CPD there will be supported masterclasses and challenge events and it is anticipated that communities of practice will emerge from these.

Areas covered will include using technology to support learning and teaching and innovative pedagogical approaches

Technical staff take part in the University mentoring scheme.

University continues to subscribe to HEaTED to allow all Technical Staff to access this resource. Institution membership means that technical staff themselves do not require to join individually

Staff Development Adviser liaises with the HEaTED representative for Scotland to ensure Strathclyde keeps up to date with any new L&D opportunities

Modern Apprentice provision for young people entering the profession

The University has an appraisal system which all staff take part in every year. Our system is called: Accountability and Development Review (ADR). During a focused discussion between Reviewer and Reviewee, job role, work expectations and development are discussed and progressed.

The University promotions panel meets twice yearly where they consider applications for re-grading. Successful applicants are considered for re-grading as appropriate, and also contribution pay.

Sustainability

Modern Apprenticeship programme to grow the Technical Staff provision – Strathclyde is still one of the few Universities to have our own Assessment Centre

Our development programmes as mentioned above

Our leadership programmes as above

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:

There are many initiatives here at Strathclyde that are in place to enhance the visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability of our technical workforce. Here are few that have been in place since becoming commitment signatories:

Enhanced web site presence. We have a web page which holds information and support for technical staff in terms of their development opportunities and moving forward, we will use this page to highlight achievements of our technical staff to enhance visibility, recognition and reward. One of the future projects is to add photographs of technicians at work, explaining the role they are carrying out, and putting these role into context of the work of the wider department.

Staff Development Advisor worked with focus group to identify development requirements of technical staff

Developed and delivered a 2 level development programme for technical staff attended by 18 members of staff over 2 years

7 technical staff applied for and gained, Associate Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy, one was cited by the external panel as a 'model application'. Achievement will be

celebrated at our Teaching and Learning day this year, and at our programme award ceremony in October.

HEaTED visited the organisation in May 2018 to promote the HEaTED provision for CPD. Attended by around 30 members of the technical workforce, and a short video of the session has been posted on the web page for technical staff

The HEaTED CATTS toolkit has been purchased and has been advertised to all technical staff prior to our ADR (appraisal process)

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):

** A future plan will be attached to our final submission in October

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

The plan has been development with input from the following:

Approximately 20 members of our technical staff who worked as part of our focus group to develop the Technical Staff Development Programme

Staff Development Adviser

The Modern Apprentice Co-ordinator

We have a Faculty sub-forum in Science that meets twice yearly. The Dean of Science meets with our technical staff in the Faculty and discusses and accepts feedback on topics such as: how are staff are continuing to meet our organisation values, promotion cases going forward for re-grading etc.

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

**this is being developed further from being merely about staff development opportunities to containing wider information for technical and staff and to celebrate achievements. When the 2 year plan is finalised, this will also be uploaded and visible on this page.

Signed……………………………………….(Technician Commitment Nominated Institutional Lead)

Date:

Signed……………………………………………..(Technician Commitment Signatory – Leader of Institution)

Date:

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
Visibility Ensure that technicians within the organisation are identifiable and that the contribution of technicians is visible within and beyond the institution	• 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'
Recognition Support technicians to gain recognition through professional registration	• 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
Career Development Enable career progression opportunities for technicians through the provision of clear, documented career pathways	• 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
Sustainability Ensure the future sustainability of technical skills across the organisation and that technical expertise is fully utilised	• 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