

Technician Commitment: Stage 3 Self-Assessment & Action Plan Guidance

Evaluating Impact through Self-Assessment & Future Action Planning

Organisation: University of Reading

Name of Institutional Lead: Karen Henderson

E-mail: k.henderson@reading.ac.uk

Please provide an overview of technical staff structures in your organisation, along with details of any changes to these over the past 6 years in response to the Technician Commitment.

There are approximately 170 technicians employed by the University of Reading. Broadly, of these, 20% are grant funded fixed-term research technicians, 10% support dairy research and associated operations at an off-site farm and 70% are permanent employees who sit in a centralised Technical Services function that was established in 2016. Technical staff in the latter group provide support in 'specialist areas' to nine Schools: (1) Biological Sciences (2) Chemistry, Food and Nutritional Sciences and Pharmacy (3) Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences (4) Agriculture and Policy Development (5) Archaeology, Geography and Environmental Sciences (6) Mathematical, Physical and Computational Sciences (7) Institute of Education (8) Built Environment and (9) Arts and Communication Design. Technical Services staff are organised into four Clusters and each Cluster is subdivided into divisions. Broadly, Cluster 1 supports teaching and research in the Health and Life Sciences disciplines (Schools 1-3 above). Cluster 2 supports teaching and research in the Environment disciplines (Schools 4-6 above). Cluster 3 supports teaching and research in the Arts, Construction and Education disciplines (Schools 7-9 above). Cluster 4, the Operations Cluster provides overarching mechanical, glassblowing and electronics workshop support and compliance support to all of the Schools above in relation to logistics, equipment and infrastructure activities. In addition, we have five full-time professional Health and Safety Coordinators who advise and guide staff and students in the nine Schools above.

Please provide an overview of the governance, leadership and reporting lines of the Technician Commitment at your institution, along with details on how it is resourced, and information on how your organisation has engaged with the wider community within and beyond your institution. How has this developed since you became a signatory?

Activity associated with the Technician Commitment sits in Technical Services. Technical Services reports to the Head of the Directorate of Research and Innovation, the UEB Lead of the Directorate being the deputy Vice Chancellor of Research and Innovation. As well as oversight by our UEB Lead, monitoring usually occurs during the annual 5 year planning cycle where priorities and progress associated with the Technician Commitment are reported in the 5 year planning round. The plan is

reviewed by the Planning Group (includes the deputy VC, Chief Financial Officer, the Chief Strategy Officer & University Secretary and all of the PVCs). Within Technical Services the Technician Commitment Working Group is open to all Technical Services staff to join. We make a call for new members every few years. We have had approximately 20 team members involved (Grades 3-9). They have developed actions with input from our Technical Services Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Working Group (18 members, Grades 2-9).

Internally, Technical Services now sits in a Directorate alongside Research Services, the Doctoral and Researcher College, Library Services and Museums and Special Collections. This positive change will enable increased collaborations across the research and education landscape and associated aspirations are included in this action plan.

Externally, with King’s College London, we co-Chair the London and South-East Technician Commitment Regional Network (currently 25 members, including research institutes and the Natural History Museum). Collaborations over the reporting period are included in this submission.

Please provide a RAG analysis on your institutional 36-month action plan indicating which activities you have undertaken and completed (green), which are in progress (amber) and which are still to be carried out (red). Please provide an explanation for those categorised as red.

This may be detailed here or attached to this document as an appendix.

Given that we are at stage 3, there are some overlaps of actions and for clarification and tracking, **A** refers to actions first developed in our 2018-2020 action plan, **B** refers to actions first developed in our 2021-2024 action plan and **C** refers to actions developed for our 2024-2027 action plan).

36 month action plan January 2021-January 2024			
Visibility Ensure that technicians within the organisation are identifiable and that the contribution of technicians is visible within and beyond the institution.			
	Action	Impact	
B1.	<p>2021 Action: As with all Schools and Functions, we have a budget for Celebrating Success Vouchers and Lump Sum awards, however (apart from our Employee of the Year award), when we make these awards, they are not widely known about or celebrated. This is also the situation when technical staff are regraded, although we do publicise appointments of team members to higher grade roles. We will increase visibility of the award of Celebrating Success Vouchers and Lump Sum Awards to increasingly demonstrate that recognition of success within Technical Services is well-established.</p> <p>Progress: We have celebrated awards and associated achievements at our Staff Meetings, in our monthly newsletter and at our Annual Celebratory Event. In</p>	<p>In our most recent annual culture survey (August 2023, 68% response rate) of those who agreed/disagreed, 96% either strongly agreed or agreed that ‘we celebrate the achievements of Technical Services staff (e.g. celebrating success vouchers, local and external awards)’.</p>	G

	<p>addition, we have presented longitudinal data for accelerated increments, re-grades and appointments to higher grade roles at staff meetings and this information, with a diversity and inclusion lens, has also been discussed with, and considered by, our Technical Services Diversity and Inclusion group and subsequently included in a PTO Athena Swan submission.</p> <p>In addition to visibly celebrating awards, we have made our procedures more visible by updating and publishing our Local User Guide (LUG_6 Reward and Recognition) on the Technical Services Sharepoint site. This aligns with University procedures and describes our local reward committee where we ensure that all reward cases are reviewed and allocated in an equitable manner.</p>		
B2.	<p>2021 Action: Our promotion of our activities beyond the University are rather sporadic, with occasional appearances in national technical newsletters and articles. We will incorporate and implement a communication strategy and associated plan into our Technician Commitment Working Group to ensure that we submit stories to national bodies such as the Science Council and Technician Commitment. In addition we will consider means by which we can publicise our community activities more widely in the local area.</p> <p>Progress: Members of our Technician Commitment Working Group have increasingly worked with the Marketing, Communication and Engagement team and a colleague in the Knowledge Transfer Centre. Outcomes include annual nominations to the THE Outstanding Technician of the Year Award, participation in YES (Young Entrepreneurs Scheme) invitations to participate in talks on local radio about the role of university technicians, interviews with UKRI, participation in the University Community Day, information on X and articles on the Staff Portal . In addition, we now liaise with the University Community Officer and HR and are engaging with two local charity groups. This has involved showing members of the local community around our specialist spaces, describing our roles at the University and outlining how we can support individuals should they wish to gain work experience or choose to apply for our entry route vacancies.</p>	<p>Andy Whittam, a Technical Manager in our Operations team was shortlisted in the THE Outstanding Technician of the Year Award in 2021.</p> <p>Hong Lin went on to win this accolade in 2022. Llama expert named best technician by THE . This was widely publicised and celebrated and we have been invited to give talks on Hong’s achievements (internally and externally). Hong also appears in the UKRI 101 jobs that change the world campaign video</p> <p>Ross Wilson was one of the first trailblazing technicians in the country to enter the YES competition, and in 2023, was part of the winning team Technician team secures YES success (mitalent.ac.uk)</p> <p>Our marketing team publicised a visit from members of a homelessness charity. This was hosted by the VC and supported by</p>	G

		<p>Technical Services Technical careers showcased during homelessness charity visit</p>	
B3.	<p>2021 Action: Our Technical Services TechNET sessions run on a fortnightly basis outside of term time and until now these have usually involved contacts from other Functions providing information on their role and information sharing and initiatives across the University. We will change the focus of a number of these sessions to include our own technicians to describe and showcase their work and expertise.</p> <p>Progress: We scheduled a Technical Services campaign within our TechNet programme and ran over 10 sessions in 2021 where team members from each of our divisions ran sessions describing support activities within their areas. These included each of our research facilities, fieldwork, practical class work across the Science and Arts. Talks were given by a range of staff from apprentices, those undertaking PhDs, senior technicians and managers.</p> <p>At our annual celebratory event, each division presents a poster showcasing their work to Technical Services colleagues, our keynote speaker and external guests.</p>	<p>The aim was that Technical Services staff have an increased understanding of activities across Technical Services and networks continue to develop.</p> <p>In our most recent annual culture survey (August 2023, 68% response rate) of those who agreed/disagreed, 93% either strongly agreed or agreed with 'I feel like I belong in my Technical Services team'.</p>	
B4.	<p>2021 Action: Continue to raise the external visibility of technical staff at all levels by equipping them with the knowledge and confidence to represent the University at technical conferences and external workshops. This also aligns with the career development pillar.</p> <p>Progress: We have increasingly involved team members from all levels including apprentices and trainees in giving talks at technical conferences and external workshops. Those presenting are supported before their talks with guidance and tips before events and a Presenting with Power course run by People Development is recommended.</p>	<p>We have a larger group (approximately 10% of our population) of technical staff (from Grade 3 upwards) who have presented at external conferences and events at other universities. These include presentations hosted by our London and SE Technician Commitment network members e.g. Winchester School of Arts, King's College London, Brunel University and in addition, the 2023 IST Conference.</p> <p>'Having opportunities presenting to externals boosted my confidence greatly and also increased my visibility in the wider</p>	G

		community' (<i>one of our Research Facility technicians</i>)	
B5.	<p>2021 Action: Working with GRA and MCE, students to have increased awareness and appreciation of technical roles at the University by featuring technical staff in future prospectuses, Career Events and Open Days.</p> <p>Progress: Our aim was to have greater visibility with students. Whilst we have achieved this in minor ways e.g. different colour lab coats and participation in Open Days, we have not featured in Career Events or prospectuses</p>	This will be carried over in the Phase 3 action plan (C5).	A
B6.	<p>2021 Action: Through our Technical Services Outreach Working Group we will develop an Outreach strategy.</p> <p>Progress: Our Outreach Group Working Group reviewed our extensive involvement in Outreach and considered how much of this is to support recruitment of students to the University and how much is technician led to raise the visibility of technical staff. Conclusions resulted in a decision to focus efforts associated with technician led activity to short-life projects.</p>	Outreach strategy is complete.	G
B7.	<p>2021 Action: As a result of the pandemic we developed a range of orientation videos that were made available to students to familiarise them with the new arrangements that were in place in labs, studios and workshops before they came on to campus. We will use these skills to develop videos for inductions and training of staff and students, and on the Technical Services website.</p> <p>Progress: Our Film, Theatre and Television team produced a film about the support that we provide to staff and students and this will soon appear on our Technical Services webpages.</p> <p>Our advertisements for vacancies direct job applicants to our EDITS (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Technical Services) webpages where the film will be found and viewed by prospective applicants.</p>	We now have additional ways of increasing our visibility with job applicants, students and staff.	G
<p>Recognition Support technicians to gain recognition through professional registration and external award schemes</p>			
	Action	Impact	
B8.	<p>2021 Action: Through discussions with MCE we will determine how to best publicise our efforts associated with the Technician Commitment and that professional registration is recognised at UoR.</p>	Through our 5 year plans and our presentation to University Council, our activities are recognised at	G

	<p>Progress: External award schemes are covered in the Visibility section above.</p> <p>We have raised awareness of our efforts associated with the Technician Commitment and professional registration in a number of ways. Our Technical Services 5 year plan, which is reviewed by the Change and Planning Group (most members of UEB) gives details of our progress and future goals associated with the Technician Commitment and professional registration. In addition, at the request of University Council, a member of Technical Services was invited to give a presentation about our work. This included our work in this area and in addition, responding to questions posed by Council regarding the Technician Commitment. Our endeavours are also included on our Technical Services webpages and following a request, MCE whilst undertaking a project on University webpages approved our request to continue to make our pages visible externally. In addition, job advertisements include our Employer Champion status and that we are a Technician Commitment signatory.</p>	<p>the highest levels of the University. Members of University Council provided positive feedback on our Technical Services presentation, congratulating us on our efforts.</p> <p>In our most recent annual culture survey (August 2023, 68% response rate) of those who agreed/disagreed, 89% either strongly agreed or agreed that ‘my contributions are valued’.</p>	
B9.	<p>2021 Action: Our involvement in demonstrating in, and running of, practical classes and supporting project students in specialist areas is an important part of the student experience. In addition, we have an increasing number of Associate Fellows and Fellows of the HEA. Technical Services to raise our profile and demonstrate our excellent support to teaching.</p> <p>Progress: Our involvement in demonstrating and running of practical classes is increasingly recognised. Our efforts associated with delivering teaching during the pandemic was an enabler here. This is evidenced by contact from members of UEB and project teams when teaching information is required or changes to teaching are being planned. Examples include requests to provide data on our teaching activities, involvement in project teams when changes to student numbers and modules are being considered and when planning the move from terms to semesters.</p> <p>In addition to support from our Centre for Quality Support and Development (CQSD) department, two of our Technical Services Fellows of the HEA have continued to run local workshops to support Associate Fellow and Fellow applications.</p>	<p>Aim to have a reference to technical staff in Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) submission.</p> <p>The principle of a reference to technical staff being included in TEF was welcomed. This did not transpire solely due to Technical Services not taking up the opportunity in time. However, as outlined in the column to the left, recognition that we are a key stakeholder in teaching is now in place.</p> <p>Success continues with technical staff achieving HEA accreditation.</p>	G
B10	<p>2021 Action: at least 40% of Technical Services staff are professionally registered/accredited as Registered</p>	<p>We continue to have successes with professional</p>	A

	<p>Science Technicians, Registered Scientists, Chartered Scientists (we have Employer Champion status), Registered Practitioners, Fellows and Associate Fellows of the HEA. Our action is to increase this through supporting staff with workshops and a network of mentors.</p> <p>Progress: We continue to run internal workshops for professional registration and HEA accreditation. In 2022/2023 these were delivered by a Senior Technician who was seconded to a higher grade Technician Commitment Project Manager role.</p> <p>Whilst we have continued to increase uptake of professional registration (at all levels i.e. CSci, RSci and RSciTech) we have seen a drop in applications. We have not achieved the target of 65% that was previously set. It is likely that the loss of face to face assessments may have contributed to this decline and we are increasing the frequency of local professional registration workshops in an attempt to encourage progress with online applications.</p> <p>In addition, we are implementing alternative means of recognition including Institute of Leadership (ILM) and Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) accreditation.</p>	<p>registration, /accreditation. However a drop in applicant numbers and departures of registered/accredited staff have resulted in us falling significantly short of our target. The decline in professional registration has also been noted by members of the London and Sout East Technician Commitment Network. We are now lobbying the Science Council to revive face to face assessments. Technical staff, despite excellent practical skills, sometimes find the online application requirements daunting. In considering inclusivity, we feel that the option to have a face to face assessment will address this general decline in applicant numbers.</p>	
B11	<p>2021 Action: Our Technical Services website includes role profiles of most of our staff. As well as updating these pages and including qualifications we will include professional registration and accreditation status. Technical staff will see that our professional registration is an important expectation in career development.</p> <p>Progress: This has been completed.</p>	<p>The aim was that accreditation status is included on our Meet the Team webpages (subject to consent).</p> <p>In our most recent annual culture survey (August 2023, 68% response rate) of those who agreed/disagreed, 70% either strongly agreed or agreed that ‘Professional registration, Registered Practitioner and/or HEA fellowship are important expectations in my career development’;</p>	G
B12	<p>2021 Action: Our generic job descriptions have served us very well and until now have included professional registration as a desirable criterion. We will now update these to include professional registration, or the ability to achieve this within an appropriate timeframe, as an essential criterion when advertising roles. We will also</p>	<p>Please refer to B10 for next steps regarding this action.</p>	G

	<p>align our technical career framework to expectations relating to level of professional registration.</p> <p>Progress: We have continued to include professional registration as a desirable criterion in our job descriptions. As detailed in action B10, we have put this action on hold as we have become more cautious due to the drop in applicants. We do not want to introduce what may be seen as unrealistic expectations given that some of our population find the online application route more challenging.</p>		
B13	<p>2021 Action: We support research through our technical staff being based in research facilities such as the Chemical Analysis Facility, Confocal Microscopy Facility, Crops Research Facilities, Bioresource Unit and MRI Facility. In addition, we have a pool technician model where technician time outside of research facilities is bought out for research. We will determine the level of recognition/acknowledgement of our technical staff in research publications with a view if appropriate, to develop protocols for consistently recognising these contributions.</p> <p>Progress: We determined that acknowledgement was inconsistent. Whilst a few technical staff were fully recognised in publications, including co-authorship, others, despite significant involvement in research activity, had no acknowledgement. Following sight of a policy at the University of Bath, that sets out guidance on how academics acknowledge technical staff in publications, a similar policy, (with permission), was developed by our Technician Commitment Working Group and reviewed by members of our Technical Services Research Forum. The University Board for Research and Innovation approval this document and it was then distributed to all Research Division Leads across the University.</p>	<p>The aim was that Technical Services staff will be increasingly named in research publications (if their contribution is currently found to be poorly recognised)</p> <p>The policy framework is now in place. Our next action will be to determine how effective this is by working with colleagues in the Directorate of Research and Innovation to quantify acknowledgements. This appears in our Stage 3 action plan (C6).</p>	G
<p>Career Development Enable career progression opportunities for technicians through the provision of clear, documented career pathways</p>			
	Action	How impact will be evidenced	
B14	<p>2021 Action: As well as reviewing and updating our generic job descriptions to align to professional registration/accreditations schemes, we will consider if any improvements can be made associated with D&I and Inclusion mindful of career development opportunities for underrepresented staff (also aligns with Sustainability pillar below).</p>	<p>Our D&I group reviewed and updated job descriptions and person specifications. In addition, wording in advertisements was modified.</p>	G

	<p>Progress: Following a discussion between our D&I Group and the Dean of D&I in 2021 we expanded this action. As well as reviewing and updating our generic job descriptions, we developed and implemented a Local Use Guide (LUG) on recruitment in Technical Services. LUG 9 includes requirements for training in unconscious bias for panel members, (100% completion by Leadership Team), our standard advertisement text including our own statement of commitment to D&I and links to our EDITS (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Technical Services) webpages.</p>	<p>Recent feedback indicated that the use of non-gendered pronouns in our advertisements encouraged a non-binary candidate to apply for, and secure, a vacancy.</p>	
B15	<p>2021 Action: We are aware of our staff occasionally missing out on securing vacancies at higher grades due to a lack of confidence in applying for roles (despite having the appropriate knowledge and skills). We will increase support of technical staff during internal job application processes with job application workshops and interview preparation sessions.</p> <p>Progress: Our HR Partner and HR Advisor have delivered sessions on the University job application process, interview preparation and interview skills to all Technical Services staff who expressed an interest in these sessions.</p>	<p>This is complete.</p> <p>In addition, where essential criteria have been met, managers invite all internal candidates to interview during the shortlisting process. This provides experience of applying for roles and the being interviewed.</p>	G
B16	<p>2021 Action: Our technical career pathway provides opportunities to progress through the research technical expert pathway in addition to the managerial pathway. There does not appear to be sufficient awareness of this route amongst all of our technical staff. We will develop and publicise case studies of our technical experts and consider how we upskill to become experts including training, interaction with industry and with our university links.</p> <p>Progress: From 2021 we have included Technical Experts as presenters at some of our TechNet sessions. They have spoken about their roles in University Research Facilities In 2022, we established our Technical Services Research Forum. This is open to all Technical Services staff and our 6 weekly meetings are usually attended by approximately 20-40 attendees. Technical Experts give talks on use of analytical and imaging equipment, their involvement in research, their career journeys and how they became experts in their fields. As well as hearing from Technical Services colleagues, speakers from other areas of the University give talks on how to write grants, Research Culture and strategic research activity at the University.</p>	<p>Technical staff are increasingly aware of the technical expert pathway as demonstrated in our annual Technical Services staff survey.</p> <p>In our most recent annual culture survey (August 2023, 68% response rate) of those who agreed/disagreed, 74% agreed with 'I am aware of three career pathway streams in Technical Services i.e. 1) Teaching and Research, 2) Research and 3) Operations'.</p>	G

B17	<p>2021 Action: We have technical staff who demonstrate in practical classes as standard, though the responsibility of technical staff running practical classes is inconsistent across the Schools. We will review our approach and clarify responsibilities in this area. In addition, we will explore the responsibilities of teaching staff in Schools and clarify if there are any overlaps and/or opportunities for technical staff who would like to be developed to pursue non-technical careers in teaching.</p> <p>Progress: Managers were reminded that our generic job descriptions define teaching responsibilities at each grade and that demonstrating and running practical classes/workshops are important development opportunities for staff. Post-pandemic we have revived teaching activities that were put on hold. Our review of responsibilities of teaching staff in Schools highlighted that there is parity in job descriptions and Technical Services staff are able to apply for teaching focussed roles. Our annual Teaching Skills for Technician course, developed and delivered by the Centre for Quality Staff Development continues to run and all technical staff involved in teaching are expected to attend.</p>	<p>Since our last submission, responsibilities of technical staff in running practical session have been clarified. In our most recent annual culture survey (August 2023, 68% response rate) 74% agreed with 'I have access to ways in which to build my teaching skills (e.g. Teaching Skills for Technicians course, involvement in demonstrating and running training/practical sessions)', 22% didn't agree/ disagree or didn't know and 4% disagreed.</p> <p>Teaching responsibilities of teaching staff in Schools have been clarified and technical staff are able to apply for School roles.</p>	G
B18	<p>2021 Action: Currently we support technical staff to attend conferences and training and development events, however although discussed and agreed as part of the PDR process, we allocate budget to this on an ad hoc manner and we do not follow up to determine the learning outcomes. We will roll out an annual call to all technical staff for them to make a case for attendance at conferences in a fair manner and the expectation will be that technical staff report back at technical staff meetings or in the Technical Services newsletter.</p> <p>Progress: We now have an annual call to all technical staff to prompt them to discuss conference and development opportunities with their managers. Following a written justification for conference attendance, approval from the central budget (for course fees, travel and or accommodation) is considered. So far, we have been able to approve all requests. Colleagues make their peers aware of the learning outcomes at our all staff meetings.</p>	<p>Staff make colleagues aware of conference attendance through talks at staff meetings and in our newsletter. As well as science and art conferences, colleagues have attended Advance HE Diversifying Leadership, Herschel Programme for Women in Leadership and Aurora. In addition, two colleagues participated in the David Sainsbury Science Museum outreach programme, this was a development opportunity that ran over many months.</p> <p>In our most recent annual culture survey (August 2023, 68% response rate) 67% agreed/strongly agreed with 'I know how to secure funding to attend training events and/or conferences',</p>	G

		18% disagreed and 14% didn't know.	
B19	<p>2021 Action: With the exception of Health and Safety courses, our uptake of training tends to be when courses are identified and pursued through the PDR process. Whilst an excellent approach, we need to address inconsistencies across Technical Services in the quantity and type of training undertaken. We will work with People Development to carry out a training needs analysis for Technical Services in its entirety and align this to our career pathway.</p> <p>Progress: This is now complete. We now have a documented training needs matrix that lists knowledge and skills recommended for each grade against the University courses that are available.</p>	<p>The training needs matrix document is available to managers and team members for discussion at, as a minimum, the annual PDR. This further supplements our career development opportunities. In our most recent annual culture survey (August 2023, 68% response rate) of those who agreed/disagreed, 77% agreed with 'I receive useful feedback on my career development through Performance Development Reviews'.</p>	G
B20	<p>2021 Action: Prior to the pandemic we were about to publicise opportunities for shadowing and job tasters across our South East and London Technician Commitment Leads Network. We will re-establish this once the pandemic subsides. We will also explore work shadowing with surrounding institutions/companies.</p> <p>Progress: We have established links with UCL, the University of Warwick and the Natural History Museum and have been successful in running some job tasters for University of Reading staff. Reciprocal arrangements are in train.</p>	<p>Technical staff have reported that they have developed more knowledge, skills and insights into different ways of working as a result of our job shadowing opportunities.</p>	G
B21	<p>2021 Action: Set up 'my career before UoR' and 'my career after UoR- next destinations' sessions with current and ex-employees in our TechNET programme and our newsletter to increase awareness of technician career opportunities across and beyond the sector.</p> <p>Progress: We have articles in our newsletters that have been written by technical staff who have taken up positions elsewhere in the University. For example, we have a technician who is now an Apprenticeship manager, working in HR and a technical manager who is now a Project Manager in our Planning and Strategy Office. In addition, we have colleagues who now work in Environmental Sustainability positions at other universities.</p>	<p>Technical staff recognise our commitment to career development both internally and our acknowledgement and celebration of success externally.</p> <p>In our most recent annual culture survey (August 2023, 68% response rate) of those who agreed/disagreed, 83% agreed with 'My line manager supports my career development'.</p>	G
<p>Sustainability Ensure the future sustainability of technical skills across the organisation and that technical expertise is fully utilised</p>			
	Action	How impact will be evidenced	

B22	<p>2021 Action: Technical Services to seek approval to implement a formal means to network with externally funded research technicians at the University to increase their awareness of professional registration schemes and career development opportunities, extending sustainability of technicians across the university.</p> <p>Progress: We continue to informally network with externally funded technicians through extending invitations to attend our staff meetings. A number have secured permanent roles in Technical Services. We have supported fixed-term staff in the acquisition of research skills and this has contributed to career development beyond the University. In response to a request in our 2022 5 year plan, formal approval was obtained to approach and extend our activities to more fixed-term technicians. This remains a work in progress and will feature in our Phase 3 action plan.</p>	<p>More fixed-term technicians will be aware of Technician Commitment activities. This is ongoing and has been carried over to our Phase 3 action plan (C13).</p>	A
B23	<p>2021 Action: We will rollout coaching and mentoring provision to technical staff and ensure technical staff have the opportunity to access a mentor/coach. We will work to establish a sustainable, supportive, empowered and growing network of mentors and mentees, that will align with other mentoring networks which run University wide, and within other Functions.</p> <p>Progress: The University offers courses on coaching and we now have good take up amongst our leadership team. Following support from a People Development manager, technical staff who were interested in being either a mentee or mentor (or both) attended a session to understand more about the mentoring/mentee relationships. Those who then expressed an interest in being mentors were trained. We currently have 5 formal mentoring relationships in place. Each of these cover activities including career development, professional registration and developing a career in health and safety.</p>	<p>We are now able to quantify the number of mentors and mentees in Technical Services and awareness of the scheme is increasing. In our most recent annual culture survey (August 2023, 68% response rate) 64% agreed/strongly agreed with the statement 'I have access to a mentoring scheme in Technical Services', 14% disagreed and 27% didn't know. A comment from one mentee 'It's been very helpful to have a more experienced member of Technical Services to give objective advice and guidance on career progression and tackling particular challenges'.</p>	G
B24	<p>2021 Action: In attracting new candidates when advertising vacancies, we will work with HR to link our Employer Champion and Technician Commitment information to adverts.</p> <p>Progress: This is now complete.</p>	<p>This is now complete.</p>	G

B25	<p>2021 Action: As part of our Outreach Working Group strategy we will engage more with local primary and secondary schools and as well working with the Schools (at the University) in widening participation activities for prospective students, we will aim to raise the visibility of the technician career and to expand the technician recruitment pool to attract those in the local community who may be interested in trainee and apprenticeship opportunities.</p> <p>Progress: We have engaged in short-life projects so far. These have included running a stall at the Royal Society Summer Science Exhibition 2023, the University of Reading Community Festival 2023 and in volunteering at the Technicians David Sainsbury Gallery at the Science Museum.</p>	<p>Our work so far has supported initiatives at a national and institutional level. With resource constraints, apart from supporting Schools at the University with their outreach activity in local primary and secondary schools, we will focus our local efforts on community initiatives including our work with Launchpad (as detailed above in B2) and GRAFT (C14).</p>	A
B26	<p>2021 Action: Through the Institutional Athena Swan Implementation Group (Co-Chaired by the Director of Technical Services) engage the Technical Services D&I Group in working on University wide actions that are part of the institutional Athena Swan action plan. This will include activities such as those relating to formalisation of the Professional Services sub-group of the Self-Assessment Team (SAT), career development, wellbeing, underrepresented groups, intersectionality and apprenticeships.</p> <p>Progress: Members of the Technical Services D&I group as a collective are active in all University D&I networks. Three colleagues are on steering groups for the Parent and Family Network, Disability Network and Women@Reading Network. The Director is the co-Chair of the Professional Services D&I Lead group. This serves to share good practice across our Functions (e.g. Finance, Estates, Digital Technology Services).</p>	<p>Technical staff are involved in leading and steering D&I improvements both within TS and across the University</p> <p>Many members of our D&I group became the Technical Services SAT for our successful PTO Athena Swan submission. Our achievements associated with gender and race equality resulted in the achievement of the first PTO award in the sector. This was at silver level Advance HE announcement</p> <p>Many of our Athen Swan actions also sit within our Phase 3 Technician Commitment action plan (C7, C8, C9. C10, C11, C14).</p>	G
B27	<p>2021 Action: We will engage fully with the new ways of working that are part of the University strategy to remain sustainable and we will continually upskill and modernise our approaches to digitisation, remote working and flexible working patterns as far as is possible, recognising the limitations for a practical, hands-on workforce.</p> <p>Progress: As with other colleagues at the university, we are equipped with devices that enable us to work online either on campus or remotely. In line with University Smart Working guidance we have a local Technical</p>	<p>Technical staff are well equipped to work online when required and there is a clear understanding of our remote working policy.</p> <p>In our most recent annual culture survey (August 2023, 68% response rate) 76% agreed/strongly agreed with the statement</p>	G

	<p>Services Smart Working Guide. This lays out the expectation that all staff, regardless of grade work on campus with a set number of development days per year when staff can work remotely. This ensures that we treat everyone equitably.</p>	<p>'Technical Services enables flexible working within the constraints of being a hands-on Function', 15% disagreed and 9% didn't agree or disagree.</p>	
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Please provide evidence that your previous action plans are having impact. (For example, you may wish to provide links to initiatives, websites, testimonials, articles/blogs).

Please see impact for each of our previous actions in the right hand column of the action plan above.

Please provide details of how your institution is enacting the recommendations of the TALENT Commission (<https://www.mitalent.ac.uk/theTALENTcommission>)

Recommendation	Response	
<p>1. Work to address any equality, diversity, and inclusivity considerations for technical workforces through implementation of targeted technician specific initiatives, and/or ensuring inclusion within wider all-staff initiatives, such as those linked to Athena Swan and the Race Equality Charter. Acknowledge that workforce characteristics of technical communities are often not uniform (e.g. reported differences by discipline area), with different approaches potentially needed for different communities.</p>	<p>Response: Our work on equality, diversity, and inclusivity has been included in the Silver Institutional Athena Swan award, the Bronze Race Equality Charter and more recently Technical Services was awarded the first PTO Athena Swan award in sector (at Silver) Advance HE announcement here. Further actions relating to this recommendation are in the Career Development and Sustainability sections of our Phase 3 2024-2027 action plan (C7, C8, C9, C10, C11, C14).</p>	G
<p>2. Review how staff contributions are recognised and rewarded at department- and institution-level, and whether inclusivity exists across all job families</p>	<p>Contributions are recognised and rewarded in an inclusive manner across all job families at the University of Reading. There are three ways in which staff can be recognised and rewarded: Celebrating Success Vouchers, Lump Sum Awards and additional increments/contribution points. Before the establishment of Technical Services in 2016, it was unusual for technical staff to be put forward for reward. Nominations for additional increments/contribution points are now regularly submitted to the Reward Committee and Technical Services staff reward is at least equivalent to that of other professional services departments. We receive a CSV and LSA budget that is allocated to all departments and academic Schools in an equitable manner. Our data, reviewed annually, demonstrates that the amounts awarded across Technical Services are</p>	G

	standardised and fairly allocated across all areas and grades.	
3. Encourage appropriate inclusion of technical staff as authors, co-authors, or contributors on published papers and presentations, including providing clear guidance for appropriate inclusion at relevant stages, and sharing examples of inclusion within newsletters etc.	As detailed in B13 above, University Board of Research and Innovation (UBRI) approval was granted for a policy, developed by our Technician Commitment Working Group, that sets out guidance on how academics acknowledge technical staff in publications. This policy was communicated to all Research Division Leaders across the University. When signing up as a user of our Chemical Analysis Facility, all researchers must sign an agreement that sets out the requirement to comply with this policy. An action relating to effectiveness of this policy is in the Recognition section of our Phase 3 2024-2027 action plan (C6).	G
4. Provide transparent guidelines for how technical staff can be costed on to grants, sharing examples of best practice.	When forming the Directorate, funding for direct research through a pool technician model was established. In 2017 a policy was developed between Technical Services and Research Services and this was approved by the University Board for Research and Innovation (UBRI). At the time of grant application or when other funding streams are available, direct research support is requested by academic staff and approved by Technical Services. This ensures transparency of the levels and types of research support provided by technicians, including those working outside of costed research facilities. Our approach has been shared with the London and South East regional network.	G
5. Enable opportunities for technical staff to be considered as co-investigators, co-supervisors, for grants or projects.	We have recently been supported by colleagues in Research Services to apply for an equipment bid. In addition, several technical staff have been named as co-investigators in a grant applications. However, we need to inform ourselves further of the opportunities that are available and access training. Actions relating to this recommendation are in the Recognition section of our Phase 3 2024-2027 action plan (C7).	A
6. Encourage and support events for visibility, outreach, and public engagement specifically for	This is detailed above. Please refer to actions that have taken place in sections B1-B8 and	G

<p>and/or including technical staff. Including e.g. showcase events, conferences, public engagement, open days, visits to local schools and colleges, T-level placements (in England), and work experience placements.</p>	<p>B25. Further actions relating to this recommendation are in the Career Development section of our Phase 3 2024-2027 action plan (C4,C5, C14)</p>	
<p>7.Support and/or deliver the collection, reporting, tracking and analysis of data on employer- and sector-wide technical workforces. For HE institutions: we call on you to submit staff records to HESA for all of your contracted technical staff (even those in England and/or NI for whom this is no longer mandatory, as of 2018/19). For all institutions: we call on you to track the size and make-up of your technical workforces.</p>	<p>The University of Reading submits staff records to HESA for all professional staff including technical staff.</p>	G
<p>8.Support the development and implementation of a new, simple, and fit-for purpose classification for technical roles in higher education, research, and innovation at all levels, such as by creating a new job family specifically for technical roles, separate from academic, administrative, or any other job family</p>	<p>Although our HRSystems was set up many years ago to differentiate between Technical Grades 1-5 and Professional and Managerial Grades 6-9, this is now an historical anomaly as the technical job family is specifically for technical roles and runs from Grade 2-9. This is equivalent to all job families at the University</p>	G
<p>9.Take a strategic approach to the sustainability of technical skills and careers, and appropriate succession planning through horizon scanning and identifying current and potential future skills gaps</p>	<p>Information is provided in our Stage 2 submission. In brief, as well as career development of our Technical Services staff, we have ensured that skills have been retained and no gaps have emerged as a consequence of retirements, therefore we have achieved business continuity in delivery of support to teaching and research activities. We have analysed skills across our population and this information alongside our flexibility bolsters our ability to provide cover to areas that had previously been considered as single points of failure. Through University Research Division Operating Plans and activities at other Universities we have identified new skills that are required and have developed and introduced new activity.</p>	G
<p>10.Appoint an institutional strategic lead, e.g. Director of Technical Skills, to lead this agenda</p>	<p>The Director of Research and Innovation previously the Director of Technical Services is the institutional strategic lead.</p>	G
<p>11. Expand entry routes to technical roles and careers by encouraging applicants from both vocational pathways and academic pathways.</p>	<p>We have recruited research technicians and post-doctoral researchers into technical roles. In addition, we have recruited non-technical</p>	G

	applicants to our career entry positions and have supported their development through trainee programmes and apprenticeships, enabling them to progress their careers as technicians.	
12. Invest in apprentices and trainee technician positions, hosting placements for qualifications (e.g. T-Levels in England) and work experience placements for local schools and colleges	We have apprentices and trainees and we are currently making available work experience placements for the disadvantaged in the local community. Further actions relating to this recommendation are in the Sustainability section of our Phase 3 2024-2027 action plan (C14)	G
13. Utilise the Apprenticeship Levy for training and developing technical staff	This is in place. We have Level 3 and Level 6 apprenticeships.	G
14. Consider piloting new opportunities for progression via Technical Specialist pathways, and/or provide opportunities and mechanisms for staff to move across career pathways and job families	We have three career streams: Teaching and Research, Research Experts and Compliance pathways. Staff have progressed their careers by moving across these pathways.	
15. Ensure provision and protected time for training and professional development, supporting technical staff to take advantage of development opportunities, such as technical training, placements, and/or professional registration. Define a minimum yearly allowance of days for technical staff to undertake professional development.	As with the researcher development concordat, Technical Services staff have protected time (10 days) for training and professional development and have a set number of 5 days within this where they can work remotely for professional development purposes.	G
16. Ensure inclusion of technical staff and/or technical expertise within end to-end recruitment processes when hiring for technical roles. This should include utilising technical expertise when compiling role profiles, advice on where to advertise, and technical input on recruitment panels.	Technical Services staff are responsible for recruitment activities in Technical Services. Where appropriate we invite academic colleagues to take part in recruitment panels	G
17. Ensure visibility of clearly defined career pathways and standardised job descriptions for technical roles and careers. Standardised job descriptions will likely have baseline commonalities, plus flexible opportunities for specialisation where needed. Ensure diverse inclusion of technical expertise during process and any reviews thereof.	We have a suite of generic job descriptions and associated person specifications specifically for technical staff. These cover all grades from ancillary technician to the Director of Technical Services (equivalent to a professor). There are three progression options i.e. management, research technical expert or compliance. Recently our Diversity and Inclusion group were involved in a review of job descriptions.	G
18. Ensure representation of technical staff on department-, faculty-, and institution-level decision-making committees, boards, panels, and similar groups, through either a dedicated seat or designated technical advocates within senior	As reported in our Stage 1 and 2 submissions, Technical Services staff sit on University Committees including AWERB, Staffing Committee, Reward Committee, University Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee,	G

<p>leadership and/or existing members. This includes processes and committees to develop institution-wide strategies and long-term goals</p>	<p>Committee for Research Infrastructure. Two of our team members have been Co-chairs of the University Staff Forum and have represented Professional Services staff on University Council. The VC runs a termly meeting with Professional Services staff and we have had several technical representatives who attend this meeting and are conduits of information directly between technical staff and the VC.</p>	<p>G</p>
<p>19. Ensure considered inclusion of technical staff within all relevant communication channels and initiatives</p>	<p>Technical Services staff receive information from the leadership Group (UEB and all Heads of Schools and Directors of Professional Services) through the Director of Technical Services. They are at least as well informed as all other colleagues at the University.</p>	<p>G</p>
<p>20. Encourage formation of partnerships with organisations and initiatives that can provide technical training and wider technical networks. These partnerships can help to facilitate delivery of more technician-specific training across or within disciplines, and provide further opportunities for placements, secondments, equipment and knowledge exchange, and sharing of best practice.</p>	<p>As outlined in our Phase 1 and Phase 2 submissions and B20, we have formed partnerships with other organisations including MRC Harwell, Warwick and UCL. We have benefited from skills training and have recently established a partnership with technical staff at the Natural History Museum (NHM). Further actions relating to this recommendation are in the Sustainability section of our Phase 3 2024-2027 action plan (C15).</p>	<p>G</p>
<p>21. Sign the Technician Commitment and engage with its initiatives and network of signatories.</p>	<p>We were one of the founding signatories in 2017. We have engaged with national signatory events (being presenters at four of these) and initiatives including participation in the Herschel programme and Science Museum volunteering activities at the David Sainsbury Technician Gallery. In addition, we co-Chair the London and South East Regional Network (25 members).</p>	<p>G</p>
<p>22. Be inclusive of technical staff and their considerations in conversations on sector-policy developments</p>	<p>Examples of inclusion of technical staff on sector-policy developments include encouragement by the deputy Vice-Chancellor for the Director of Technical Services to apply for a place on the Advance HE Athena Swan PTO working group in 2021. Outcomes of this sector-wide group included technical staff being able to apply for the Athena Swan Charter mark in their own right.</p>	<p>G</p>
<p>23. Support technical staff to contribute to and/or attend government events and initiatives to develop policy.</p>	<p>Technical Services staff are encouraged to contribute to sector wide events and initiatives. This has included membership of the Assistant Technician Apprenticeship Trailblazer Group, membership of the IST Registered Practitioner working group and</p>	<p>G</p>

	consultation on professional registration with the Science Council.	

Please provide a 36-month action plan; detailing plans to ensure your organisation continues to address the themes of the Technician Commitment and details of how impact will be evidenced and initiatives resourced: (this may be detailed here or attached to this document as an appendix). Please evidence how the ‘technician voice’ was present in the development and formation of the 36-month action plan.

Within Technical Services the Technician Commitment Working Group is open to all Technical Services staff to join. Over the years, we have had approximately 20 team members involved (Grades 3-9). They have developed actions with input from our Technical Services Diversity and Inclusion Working Group (18 members, Grades 2-9). Therefore the technician voice was fully present and responsible for the development and formation of the 36-month action plan.

36 month action plan January 2024-January 2027		
Visibility Ensure that technicians within the organisation are identifiable and that the contribution of technicians is visible within and beyond the institution.		
	Action	Impact
C1.	Raise our visibility with colleagues in our new Research and Innovation Directorate. This will be through staff meetings, communications across the Directorate, involvement in cross working groups and in joint training and development sessions.	Colleagues in the other parts of the Directorate will be increasingly aware of the contributions that technical staff make to teaching and research.
C2.	Continue to engage with community groups such as Launchpad and GRAFT (further information below in C14).	Our roles will be more visible to members of the local community.
C3.	Include case studies of some of the many colleagues who have developed their careers at the University on our Technical Services webpages.	Our career development will be visible to prospective applicants to technical staff and to other colleagues across the University.
C4.	Participate in the annual University Community Day, showcasing technical staff and their contributions to teaching and research activity.	Our roles will be visible to visitors to the University.
C5.	Continuation of B5. Working with GRA and MCE, students to have increased awareness and appreciation of technical roles at the University by featuring technical staff in future prospectuses and Career Events.	Our roles will be more visible to students.
Recognition Support technicians to gain recognition through professional registration and external award schemes		
	Action	How impact will be evidenced
C6.	Monitor appropriate inclusion of technical staff as authors, co-authors, or contributors on published papers and presentations.	Working with colleagues in the new Directorate we will quantify our inclusion and recognition.

C7	Enable opportunities for technical staff to be considered as co-investigators, co-supervisors, for grants or projects. (Athena Swan Key Priority 2. 3). Inclusion of Technical Services staff in expressions of interest for University funding opportunities to undertake their own research projects. Support and encourage Technical Services staff to participate in/submit grant applications where funding opportunities allow. Provide support for dissemination and potential impact.	Working with colleagues in the new Directorate we will quantify inclusion in expressions of interest for funding opportunities and grant applications.	
Career Development Enable career progression opportunities for technicians through the provision of clear, documented career pathways			
	Action	How impact will be evidenced	
C8.	Progress gender equality in leadership positions, this may be within Technical Services or in enabling females to progress elsewhere at the University (Athena Swan Key Priority 1).	We have at least one female each year applying for management training programmes between 2024, -2027. Females as likely as males to have applied for and been successful in being appointed to management roles (grade 6-9) by 2027. 40% of managerial roles (grades 6-9) to be occupied by females by 2027 or the same number having secured senior roles elsewhere.	
C9.	With technicians identified as researchers in the Researcher Development Concordat, request giving Technical Services staff access to training that is available through the Researcher Development Programme at the University e.g. research methodologies, research best practice, managing data and research material, presentation skills, grant proposal writing, how to get published, ethics in research etc. (Athena Swan Key Priority 2.1).	Technicians will confirm that they have accessed training associated with the Researcher Development Programme and ways in which they have made use of this.	
C10.	Improve representation of male and female staff of minoritised ethnicities at senior levels (Athena Swan Key Priority 4).	By 2027, our Leadership Team and Technical Manager Group have a representation of staff of minoritised ethnicities of 16% (including those who have secured managerial roles elsewhere in the University).	
C11.	Put a framework in place to increase inclusivity of trans and non-binary staff (Athena Swan Key Priority 5).	By 2027, in our local Culture Survey we reduce PNTS in the gender identity category (man, woman, non-binary,	

		in another way, PNTS) from 7% to 4%.	
C12	We build on secondment opportunities across the new Directorate and beyond.	Technical staff continue to develop knowledge, experience and skills in other areas of the University.	
Sustainability Ensure the future sustainability of technical skills across the organisation and that technical expertise is fully utilised			
	Action	How impact will be evidenced	
C13	From B22. More fixed-term technicians will be aware of Technician Commitment activities.	We will have more fixed-term technical staff joining our team, staff meetings and Technician Commitment workshops.	
C14.	Regarding recruitment in the local community we have ambitious actions in our Athena Swan action plan (Athena Swan Key Priority 6) and these are included in our Phase 3 action plan here. We aim to make our entry level opportunities more accessible to the local community. We will build on work experience placements with local charities (GRAFT and Launchpad) to encourage job applicants from the local community.	By 2027 our representation of staff of minoritised ethnicities is more reflective of the local community.	
C15.	We will continue to benefit from partnerships with universities, research institutes and museums. These partnerships will help to facilitate delivery of more technician-specific training and provide further opportunities for placements, secondments, equipment and knowledge exchange, and sharing of best practice.	We will increase technician-specific training offerings. More placement and secondment opportunities will enable sharing of equipment and best practice.	
C16.	As part of the Research Culture work in the new Directorate, we will work with colleagues to explore how the Technician Commitment pillars (visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability) are embedded in other professional services areas, namely, Library Services (Research Libraries UK is now a Technician Commitment signatory), University Museums, Archives and Special Collections, Doctoral and Researcher College and Research Services.	Good practice will be exchanged and embedded between the departments in the new Directorate.	

Please confirm that your Technician Commitment status and 3-year action plan is published on your organisation's website and provide the relevant URL here:

<https://www.reading.ac.uk/technical-services/more-about-technical-services>

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

Date:



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

Date: 9 January 2024