

Technician Commitment

Guidance for Completing the Self-Assessment & Action Plan

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Technician Commitment

Evaluating Impact through Self-Assessment & Future Action Planning

Organisation: University of Liverpool

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Contact Number: 0151 794 2193

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

The University of Liverpool was founded in 1881. We are the original 'red-brick university' and a member of the Russell Group of 24 research-intensive UK universities committed to an outstanding teaching and learning experience and offering unrivalled links with business and the public sector. We are committed to a research-connected education for all our students with a focus on enquiry-based learning. Our impactful research is "life changing, world shaping", in particular in three areas – advanced materials, infectious diseases, personalised health – where we are established leaders. In REF2014 81% of our research was rated internationally excellent or world leading. We have (to date) been closely associated with nine Nobel Laureates in science, medicine and peace.

As a connected, global University with multiple physical and virtual campuses – Liverpool, London, Suzhou, Singapore and online – we have worldwide influence and impact. We work hard to offer a consistently high-quality academic environment in which we educate well-rounded, enquiring global citizens who connect and engage – through their learning, research, civic engagement and inter-cultural understanding – with the world's most pressing problems. All our curricula integrate teaching and research to ensure that our students derive the maximum benefit from a dynamic environment of intellectual enquiry and challenge. We value diversity and we are a proudly inclusive institution, committed to the provision of opportunity for those with the capacity to benefit. We have an embedded culture of collaborative working that ensures staff and students work in partnership in a culture of continuous improvement.

We have 17,335 (inc. 500 part time) students and employ 5985 staff of which 651 are 'Technical'.

Please tell us how your organisation defines its technicians:

Our technicians are identified in any role description that is labelled 'Technical' within our HR system. These are then broken down into sub-categories of which the majority are focussed on supporting excellent teaching and research.

Our technicians are full time and part time employees working on a permanent or fixed term basis and technical roles range across research, teaching, facilities, crafts, IT and specialist roles.

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):

There are 651 staff in technical roles at the University of Liverpool. Fig. 1 shows the distribution by management area. These staff are primarily located at our main campus in Liverpool, Leahurst campus in Wirral and London campus in Finsbury Square.

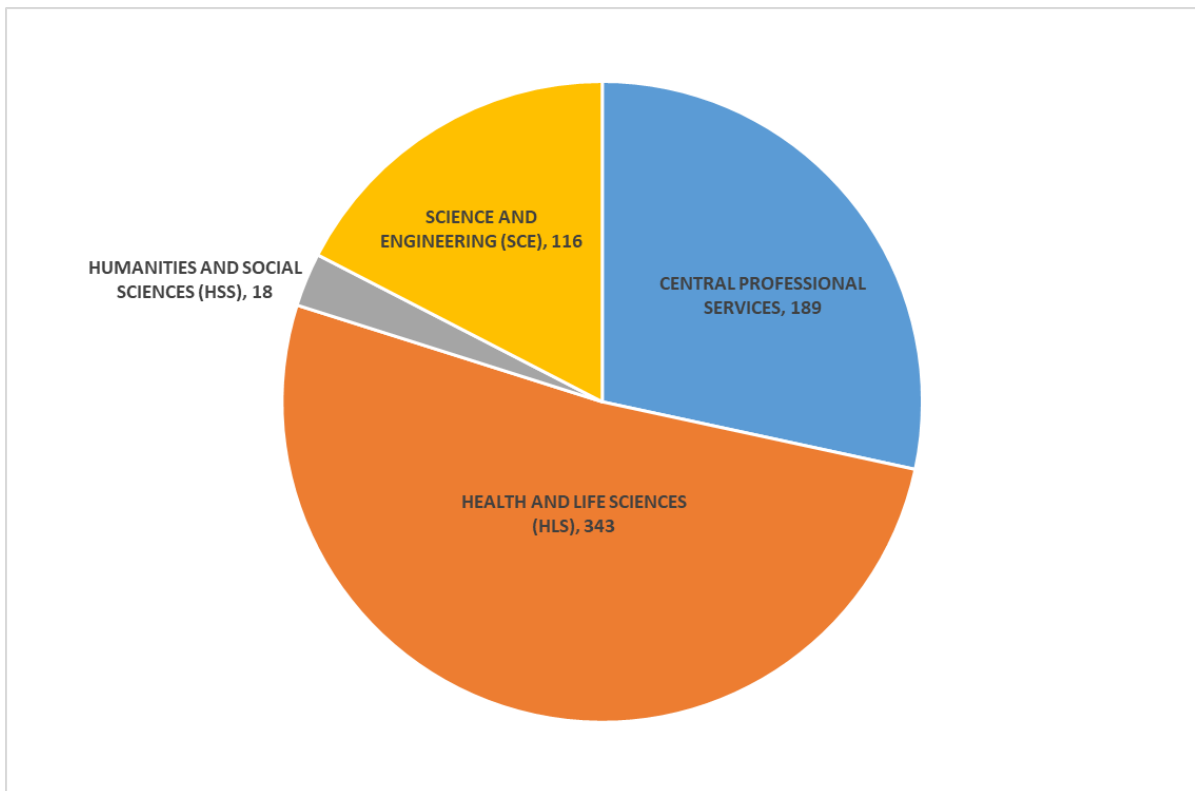


Fig 1 – Management Area of technical staff by people (August 2018)

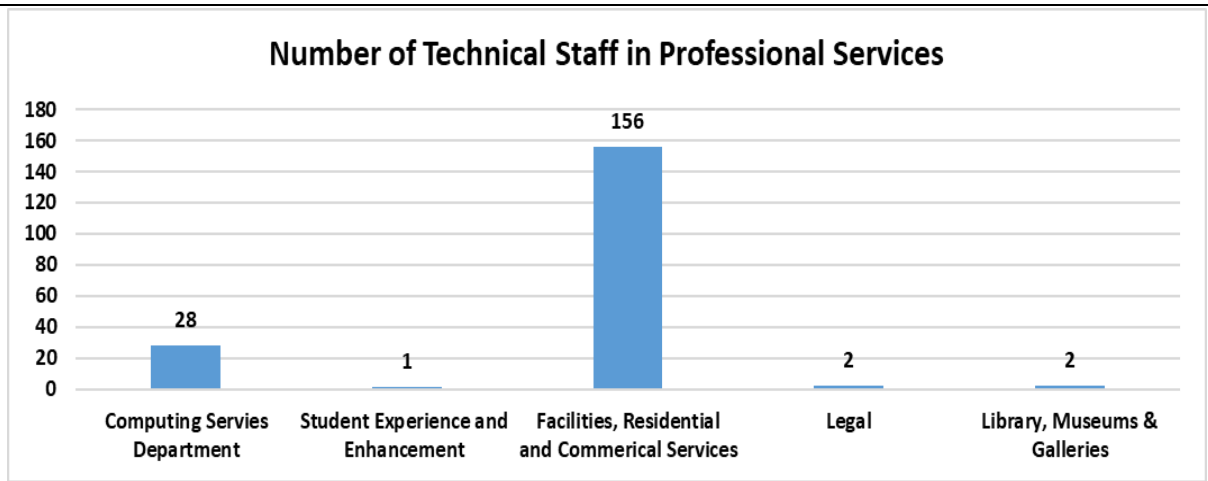


Fig 2 – Breakdown of number of Technicians within departments of Professional Services

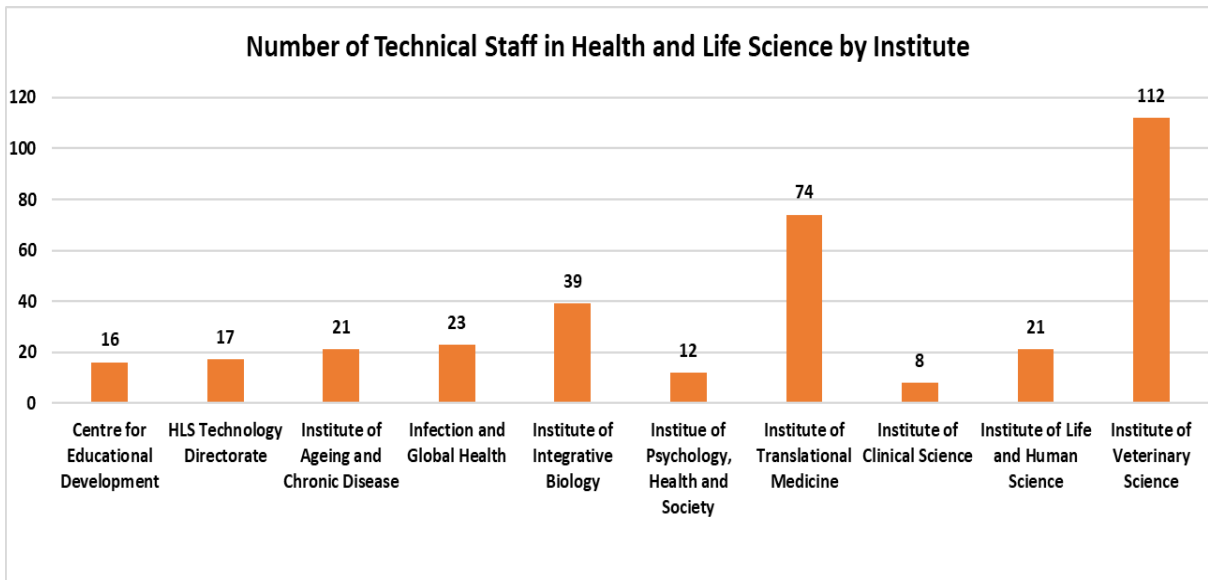


Fig 3 – Breakdown of number of Technicians within institutes of HLS

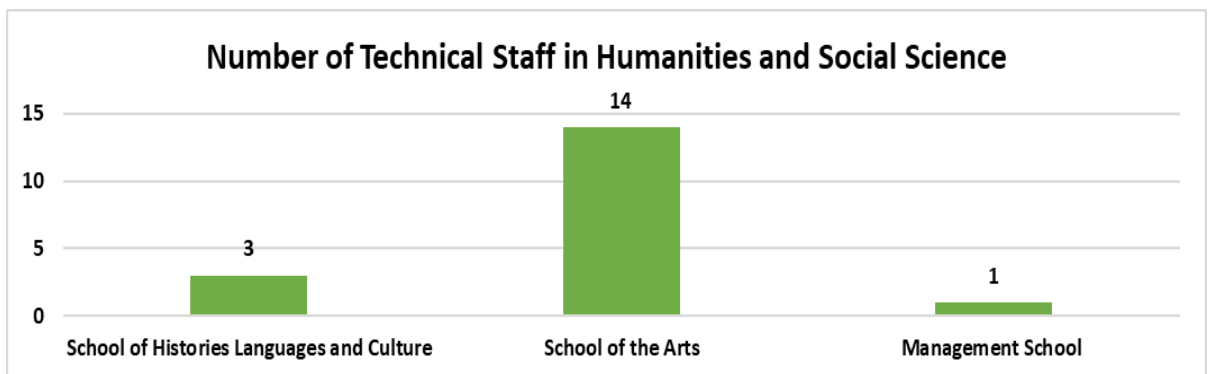


Fig 3 – Breakdown of number of Technicians within schools of HSS

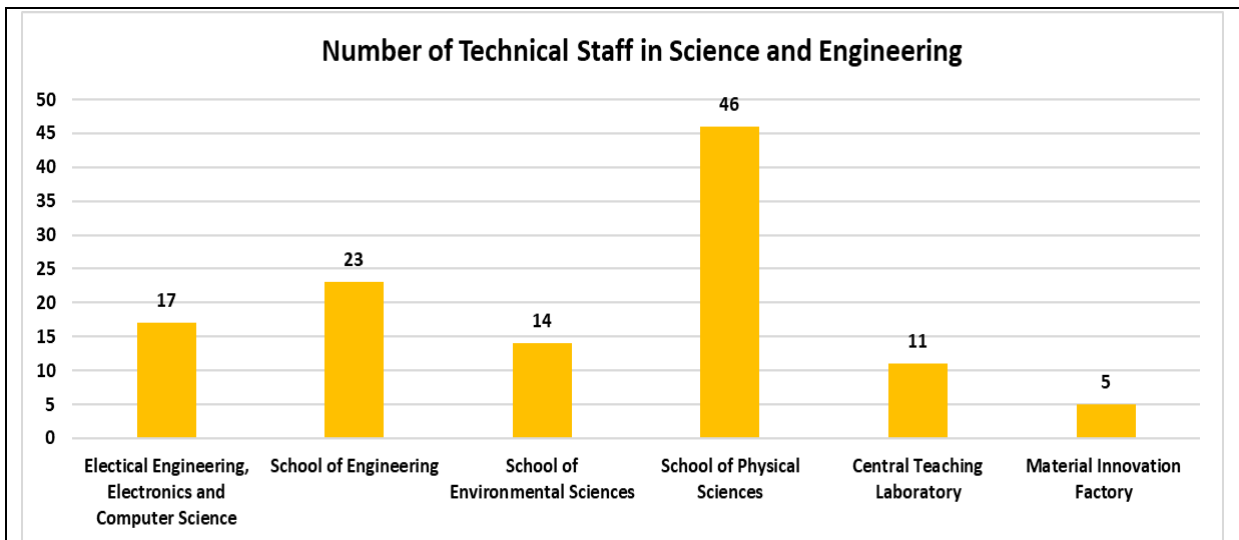


Fig 3 – Breakdown of number of Technicians within schools of SE

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

Prior to signing the commitment the University of Liverpool had created a strategy that aims to place us at the forefront of research, scholarship and knowledge leadership and to be among the top 100 universities in the world by 2026. Our technical workforce are embedded in the activities and outcomes from the three strategic pillars that support these aims:

1. Research and Impact
2. Education
3. Professional Services

Developing our workforce is a key theme across all three pillars. As such, technical role holders, as a key group of staff, have undertaken the following development activities:

Leadership Development

24 Technicians have attended our Management Essentials programme.

1 Technician has been awarded funding to undertake the Aurora programme.

1 Technician has attended the Stellar HE: BAME Leadership Programme.

Departmental Activities

1. The University has been a member of HEaTED since it was established in 2011 and has used the tools, resources and training catalogue to enable technical development activities for a broad range of roles.

2. Between 2012 -2014 8 technicians completed apprenticeships, primarily in laboratory qualifications.

3. During 2013 a project was initiated to review the skills and knowledge of the technical workforce in the faculty of Science and Engineering. This began with a working group of Technical Managers and their staff mapping out the skills and knowledge required of technical staff across the faculty that ensured a high level of teaching and research outputs.

A skills matrix was then assembled following workshops and surveys that collated all known skills that technicians had acquired within and outside of the University. The aim of producing the matrix was to enable better sharing of skills and knowledge between technical staff from across the whole faculty and to identify gaps that would need to be addressed in the future. This work is now informing our current activity in support of technical staff development.

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:

Visibility

1. A steering group was created with members representing the different faculties, campus locations and disciplines within the technical community.

2. The Steering group formed the Technical Leaders Forum, which has representation from every area of the technical workforce, covering the diverse range of skill and expertise our technical teams embody. In addition to providing development for this key group, the forum actively engages these leaders in the aims of the commitment and are using it as a vehicle to suggest opportunities, improvements and development for technicians in their respective areas and at an institutional level.

4. Technicians are being asked to directly contribute as part of programme teams in our Curriculum 2021 curriculum design framework. This process provides the mechanism by which the University's academic portfolio is being renewed to ensure the highest quality student experience and outcomes. A fundamental step within the process is bringing together all those who directly design, shape and deliver the curriculum and the student experience – including technical staff, who play a key role in a range of disciplines.

3. During June 2018 the University held its first 'One Professional Service' Conference, which had 1450 attendees over 2 days. Within this conference we held a Technicians' Showcase, a dedicated space where technicians were able to demonstrate the range, impact and complexity of work to the conference delegates. Demonstrations included 3D printing, a world speed record pedal bike, an inflatable planetarium, architectural models, live DJ and sound sampling, physics equipment from CERN, human anatomy models and virtual tours of the small animal hospital in Leahurst. Approximately 700 delegates engaged with these demonstrations, spoke to technicians and learned more about the central impact of technical staff. The positive impact of such engagement came through strongly in the conference evaluation.

4. As such, plans are underway to run another Technical Showcase during the summer of 2019. We will be placing a particular emphasis on inviting academic and research staff, particularly those in early career roles, in order to facilitate a developing discourse on the role and impact of technicians.

Our central teaching hub has been booked out for the event that will enable technicians to highlight the work they do in teaching and research through demonstrating equipment/models etc. related opportunities and development.

5. Following a cross faculty technical discussion group, the establishment of a Technical Staff Network has been agreed as an immediate priority. To this end, a Network Steering Group have met and a strategy document has been created in order to lead this work going forward.

6. We have engaged technicians in our health and safety competence group. Their contribution has been invaluable, because of their experience in H&S in developing a competency framework, managers' guide and online learning.

7. Work is underway to design and circulate an e-zine specifically designed for the technical workforce. A technician's website is also at the design stage, with the intention of providing a central hub for technician.

Recognition

1. From 2019 a new category will be entered into our annual staff awards titled 'Technician of the Year'. This will celebrate a technician that displays considerable commitment to their role and the objectives of the University and will be selected following a call for nominations.

2. In 2017/2018, the University had 5 technicians become registered in RSciTech or RSci. The following year, a further 3 technicians will be registered in RSciTech.

3. In 2018, the University has shortlisted the Institute of Translational Medicine core technical team for the Evans Memorial Professional Services award.

4. In 2016, we have had one laboratory apprentice recognised and awarded the apprentice of the year in the University staff awards.

5. The Institute of Integrative Biology, within the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, are one of only 11 departments nationwide to hold a gold Athena SWAN award. Putting in place strategies to support better mental health and wellbeing support for postgraduate students is a key part of the Athena Swan action plan and as an off-shoot of this they are now working with the Science Council, the Institute of Physics, and the Royal Society of Biology to coordinate support and training for technicians who play a major, often unrecognised, pastoral role in supporting students.

Career Development

1. We have continued to subscribe to HEaTED from a central fund, thus giving development opportunities to technicians and technical teams across the University at a discounted rate.

2. Apprenticeships have been in place for a number of years for technical roles. One of the most successful apprentices gained full employment as a technician in translational medicine and is on the way to obtaining the RSciTech status. Since the Skills Levy was introduced in April 2017 we have continued to advertise to existing staff and from October 2017 to October 2018 7 technicians have started apprenticeships utilizing the apprenticeship levy.

3. There are a range of departmental development activities that are specifically organised for technicians within faculties that are not recorded on central systems. For example courses in AutoCAD, 3D Systems and Woodwork have all run in the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences during the last 12 to 18 months. Courses in Mass Spectrometry, Human Tissue Material and various health and safety topics have taken place in the Faculty of Life Sciences.

4. A significant amount of work in creating a culture of collaboration across our professional services begun in 2018. The One Professional Service conference during the summer marked the start of a series of professional development activities that all of our Technical workforce have had the chance to deliver on or participate in. Plans are now underway to create a peer-to-peer development series specifically for the technical workforce.

5. A full review of the University's Learning & Teaching Development Programmes has recently concluded with the launch of a new suite of academic programmes. Within this renewed offer, the Introduction to Learning & Teaching and the Foundations of Learning & Teaching in Higher Education programmes have been designed to be accessible by Technicians who currently engage in teaching and the support of learning, or hope to do so in the future. The latter of these programmes is accredited against the UKPSF and provides professional recognition as an Associate Fellow of the HEA. The programmes are designed to enable staff from across all roles and disciplines to develop their practice together, forming a rich, varied community of learners. Technicians who take on more substantive teaching roles will be able to access the Post Graduate Certificate in Academic Practice alongside academic staff and other relevant role holders, leading to 60 M Level credits and status as a Fellow of the HEA.

Sustainability

1. We are currently developing a workforce strategy to determine potential skills losses over the next 10 years. The strategy will look at all non-academic staff who are over the age of 55 subdivided by age, grade, role and job description. This analysis will determine where the potential core knowledge and skills will be lost and the strategy will have measures that can be introduced to ensure our future workforce has the adequate knowledge to support teaching and research aspirations. The technical workforce is the current priority within this work, given their central role in teaching, research and the broader student experience.

Utilizing the Skills Levy is key to enabling us to introduce new junior apprentices into the organisation while up-skilling our existing staff to progress into the senior roles. This is particularly important across our technical community, as we have identified this area as at potential risk and in need of clear succession planning.

2. The Institute of Integrative Biology are collaborating with the Science Council, the University of Nottingham, and the John Innes Centre to identify key equality and diversity challenges facing the technical workforce. Outcomes will be used to promote the advantages of partnership working to showcase how the initiatives applied for technical teams can be applied to other professional services.

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):

See appendix A

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

In March 2018 the first Technical Leaders Forum was held. Over fifty leaders and managers of technical teams covering all three faculties and professional services came together to discuss each element of the commitment and how it relates to the current practices at the University of Liverpool. The discussions were captured and fed back to Technicians Commitment Steering Group who then created actions from the discussions.

These actions were then put into our 24 month action plan.

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

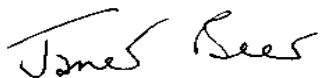
<https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/researcher/hr-excellence-in-research-badge/>



Signed..... Dr James Howard, Director of the Leadership,
Organisational, Staff and Academic Development Academy

(Technician Commitment Nominated Institutional Lead)

Date: 31st October 2018



Signed..... Professor Dame Janet Beer, Vice-Chancellor

(Technician Commitment Signatory – Leader of Institution)

Date: 31st October 2018