# Technician Commitment: Initial Self-Assessment & Action Plan Guidance

The Technician Commitment is a university and research institution initiative, led by a steering group of sector bodies, hosted by the UK Institute for Technical Skills & Strategy. The Commitment aims to ensure visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability for technicians working in higher education and research, across all disciplines. Universities and research institutes are invited to become signatories of the Technician Commitment and pledge action against the key challenges affecting their technical staff.

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

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 Board 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 Board 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 Board aims to ensure a range of forums are available to enable peers to share expertise, good practice and experiences.

To support institutional action planning, please see Appendix A for examples of activities and initiatives that have been successfully implemented in a range of universities and research institutes. Additional details are available on the Technician Commitment’s dedicated online resource, available at [techniciancommitment.org.uk](https://www.techniciancommitment.org.uk/)[.](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.

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 tc@itss.org.uk

# Technician Commitment

## Evaluating Impact through Self-Assessment & Future Action Planning

**Organisation: Liverpool John Moores University**

**Name of Institutional Lead: Katie Farrance**

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**Contact number: 0151 231 4336**

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

In July 1823, the institution was founded as the Liverpool Mechanics and Apprentice’s Library. Liverpool Polytechnic gained university status in 1992 and was named in honor of Liverpool businessman and philanthropist Sir John Moores. Sir John Moores stood for values such as honesty, integrity, equality, and hard work, which are deeply ingrained in our university's principles.

Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) comprises four faculties, and our research is actively influencing policymakers, improving lives, and addressing 21st-century challenges. LJMU employs a diverse staff of professionals, including professional service members, support staff, and academic staff. Our teams collaborate to uphold our core values, ensuring that the experience of our students, who number in the thousands, remains central to our mission.

The university has launched its People Plan for 2023-2030, aiming to support our goals of recruiting, retaining, developing, and managing high-performing, motivated, engaged, and healthy teams who are proud to work here. The six strategic themes of this plan are illustrated in the pictogram below, demonstrating the university's commitment to placing people at the heart of our success.



Please tell us how your organization defines its technicians:

Technicians within the university are classified under professional services by the HR department. The university’s technical roles encompass a variety of functions, including:

* Providing direct support to students: assisting students directly in various capacities, ensuring they have the necessary resources and support for their academic and extracurricular activities.
* Supporting research and innovation projects: contributing to the advancement of research and innovation by providing technical support and expertise.
* Teaching equipment, techniques, or skills: instructing others on how to use specific equipment, techniques, or skills, thereby enhancing the technical proficiency within the university.
* Specialisation: being experts in their field, which adds value to the university's academic and research capabilities.
* Maintaining teaching or research environments: ensuring that the spaces designated for teaching and research are properly maintained and conducive to their intended purposes.
* Implementing and enforcing health and safety practices: overseeing health and safety protocols within various spaces, including library services, studios, workshops, and laboratories, to ensure a safe working and learning environment.

The diverse roles of technicians are integral to the functioning of the university. This definition serves as a foundation for developing action plans aimed at supporting technicians in these capacities. In the spirit of inclusivity, the university encourages all staff who believe they could benefit from these initiatives to participate in the activities and continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities identified within this framework.

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):

In total there are 150 technicians within the university. The chart below shows the distribution of technicians throughout the university, based on faculty or support service.

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:

The university initially signed up in 2017.The university has several initiatives to enhance staff development and engagement. Here is a summary of these initiatives:

1. **Appraisals:**

* **Annual Performance Reviews:** These reviews are linked to personal development and performance.
* **Training Requests:** During these reviews, staff can request training that is relevant to their roles.

2. **Mandatory Training Programs:**

* Support for All Staff: The university provides mandatory training to ensure that all staff are equipped with essential skills and knowledge.
* **Role-Specific Training:** *(for example)*
**Risk Assessment**: Training on identifying and managing risks.
**COSHH Assessment:** Training related to the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health.
**Manual Handling:** Training on safe manual handling practices.
**DESEAR:** Training on the Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations.

**Gas Safety**: training on handling of cylinders and liquid nitrogen

3. **Annual Staff Conference:**

* **Networking Opportunity:** The university hosts an annual conference for all staff members.
* **Presentations and Awards**: Staff can present their work and achievements. The conference also includes staff awards, such as professional services awards, to recognize outstanding contributions.

These initiatives aim to foster a supportive and development-oriented environment for all university staff, enhancing their skills, performance, and professional growth. We aim to further these initiatives to create tailored opportunities focusing on the four key areas outlined by the technical commitment.

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

Please see Appendix B.

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:

**In 2024 the university ran the NTDC survey**. We aim to use this survey to identify staff and skills at risk within the university. As part of this specific training needs have been highlighted the university will endeavor to meet these requests (where appropriate and feasible) to ensure that core training modules are in place to support technicians.

**A Teams group has been created**. Managers will be ensuring all staff have access to a computer to facilitate this communication and digital networking across the university where physical location can reduce the collaboration across sites.

**A Working Group has formed.** Technical Managers have worked together across all faculties and professional services to develop the NTDC survey. This group will continue to meet to ensure the delivery of the technician commitment action plan in correlation with the steering group which will be formed by technical staff across the university.

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

The technical voice played and will continue to play a crucial role in the development of the institutional action plan. The National Technician Development Centre Skills survey (NTDC Survey) provided a platform for technical staff to directly express their needs. With a high engagement rate of 77% we believe that this has given a great insight into skills and development requirements across technical teams within the university. Ensuring these actions were included in the institutional plan is critical to ensure that the technicians voice is incorporated into this action plan. The NTDC survey has highlighted key areas important to technicians for career development and training needs.

In addition, the Technical Working group was critical to ensure that the technicians voice was heard. This consisted of twelve technical managers, responsible for overseeing technical teams across the university. These managers brought a direct insight from their teams into this working group. Their inclusion assured that the operation realities and challenges faced by technicians were well represents. A member academic staff has been involved to provide a bridge between the technical and academic communities within the university to ensure the action plan included integration and collaboration across academic and technical teams. Organisation and professional development have spearheaded the action plans and technical skills survey, they have been crucial in facilitation of the working groups which contributed to the action plan and have provided insight, so the action plan sits within the broader institutional goals.

By integrating these groups and survey results the university can evidence that the action plan was informed by those who understand the technical landscape within LJMU. This approach has had the technicians voice central to its development, shaping the needs of technical staff and support their professional development in accordance with the technical commitments four key areas of visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability.

Signed: Katie Farrance (Technician Commitment Nominated Institutional Lead)

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.ljmu.ac.uk/staff/technical-staff>



Date: 02/07/2024

Signed… (Technician Commitment Signatory – Leader of Institution)

Date: 23.07.2024

**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.

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| --- | --- |
| **Theme** | **Example Activities** |
| VisibilityEnsure that technicians within the organisation areidentifiable and that the contribution of technicians isvisible 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’
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| RecognitionSupport 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
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| Career DevelopmentEnable career progression opportunities for technicians through the provision of clear, documented careerpathways | * 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
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| SustainabilityEnsure the future sustainability of technical skills acrossthe organisation and that technical expertise is fullyutilised | * 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
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**Appendix B:**

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|   |  | **Activity** | **Description** | **Time Scale**  |
| **Visibility** | 1 | Clear Job Descriptions Across University | Ensure job descriptions are uniform across the university, providing clear visibility of requirements at each grade to help develop skills. | September 2024-September 2025 |
| 2 | Technical Representation on Internal Committees | Identify committees and identify if technical representation is present. Ensure technical staff are included in internal committees to represent the technical voice and contribute to decision-making processes where not already in place and relevant to the technical teams.  | August 2024- December 2024 |
| 3 | Technical Steering Group | A steering group from all grades to represent the technical voice and develop technical networks and opportunities as the action plan evolves. | July 2024- ongoing  |
| 4 | Technicians Web Page | A webpage dedicated to celebrating technical teams within the universities and their achievements. | July 2024 |
| 5 | Technical Representation in Research | Ensure technical staff are included in research days with staff and students to foster the development of research within the school. To support the [LJMU Research and Knowledge Exchange Plan](https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/-/media/files/ljmu/about-us/supporting-plans-for-strategy/research-and-knowledge-exchange-plan-2030.pdf) 2030. | July 2025-ongoing  |
| 6 | Facilitate Attendance at Internal and External Conferences and Events | Encourage staff to attend and present at external conferences and events to facilitate professional growth. To celebrate the contribution of technical staff to LJMU.  | September 2024-September 2025 |
| 7 | Promotion of Internal and External Networks | Utilising the web page, teams, and line managers to share knowledge of known internal and external networks relevant to technical teams.  | July 2024- ongoing  |
| **Recognition** | 8 | Mental Health Champion for Technical Professionals | Address the need for mental health support for technical professionals as recognized by NTDC results. | September 2024- ongoing |
| 9 | Technical Awards | Establish a Technician of the Year category in staff awards. Ensure students and staff are aware of technicians and their eligibility for nomination through student and external awards. | July 2025 |
| 10 | Inclusion of Technicians in Publication Policy | Ensure that work by technicians is recognised in publication policies by creating clear guidance. | January 2025- January 2026 |
| **Career Development** | 11 | Shadowing | Promote cross-university knowledge exchange by facilitating shadowing opportunities as part of CPD routes to support staff development. | January 2025- January 2026 |
| 12 | Technical Development Budget | Establish a personal development training fund specifically for technicians, allowing applications for training courses, conferences, and networking opportunities to be reviewed annually. | July 2024-July 2026 |
| 13 | Grant Funding Training | Provide training on grant funding to help technicians apply for external funding for professional development, research, equipment, or conference attendance. | July 2025-July 2026 |
| 14 | Research Opportunities | Provide short-term development and research placements (2-4 weeks) for technicians to develop new techniques and skills. | August 2024-July 2026 |
| 15 | Expansion of Job Families | Ensure job descriptions are standardised across the university, clearly outlining the requirements at each grade to support skill development as part of succession planning. | September 2025-July 2026 |
| 16 | Professional Registration | Encourage technicians to pursue professional registration. | September 2024- September 2026 |
| **Sustainability** | 17 | Utilizing NTDC Survey Results | Use NTDC survey results to ensure the development of staff, particularly in areas where skills are identified as at risk. | July 2024- July 2025 |
| 18 | T-Levels and Apprenticeships  | Review apprenticeships and T-Levels and trainee programs with a view to develop new entry routes into the technical profession within LJMU.  | October 2024- October 2025 |
| 19 | Knowledge Exchange Sessions | Facilitate training by technicians for technicians as part of career development, focusing on the crossover of skills specific to research and teaching at LJMU. | July 2024- July 2025 |