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

Please note: This guidance and template is for institutions who have already submitted their Stage One and Two Self-Assessments & Action Plans, 1 and 3 years after becoming an official signatory of the Technician Commitment. This guidance and template refer to the third stage of self-assessment and action planning to be submitted 6 years after the submission of the original submission.

The Technician Commitment aims to ensure visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability for technicians working in higher education and research, across all disciplines.

The third stage of self-assessment and action planning process asks for reflection on past action plans, evidence of progress and engagement and a further 36-month action plan. The self-assessment includes a 'RAG' analysis of previous action plans - a 'Red, Amber & Green' status report.

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 plans on a dedicated and discoverable webpage, along with their named point of contact. The Steering Board asks signatories to evidence that the 'technician voice' is present in the development and formation of institutional action plans. The Technician Commitment is a collaborative 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 has developed since the Commitment's inception and the Steering Board aims to ensure a range of forums are available to enable peers to share expertise, good practice and experiences.

Cross referencing to other sector institutional reviews relevant to technicians is welcomed; for example, the Steering Board are keen to learn how signatories are advancing equality, diversity and inclusion for the technical community and institutions may wish to reference Athena SWAN and Race Equality Charter submissions. The Steering Board are also keen to learn of Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) submissions and Research Excellence Framework (REF) environment statements where technicians have been explicitly mentioned. The Steering Board are particularly keen to see activity and plans to enact the recommendations of the TALENT Commission embedded in Stage 3 self-assessments and action plans.

The Technician Commitment Steering Board, through the executive team, will choose a limited number of submissions for active review between the institution and the Technician Commitment.

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 techscommit@gatsby.org.uk

Evaluating Impact through Self-Assessment & Future Action Planning

Organisation: University of Chester

Name of Institutional Lead: Rashmi Patel, Strategic Director of Human Resources

E-mail: c/o k.leighton@chester.ac.uk

Contact Number: 0 1244 512135

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.

Since the previous submission, the University of Chester (UoC) has undertaken to realign its previous academic provision (see figure 1) into three faculties (see figure 2):

- Art, Humanities & Social Sciences;

- Health, Medicine & Society;

- Science, Business & Enterprise.

FIGURE 1: UNIVERSITY OF CHESTER: FACULTIES AND SCHOOLS (PREVIOUS STRUCTURE)

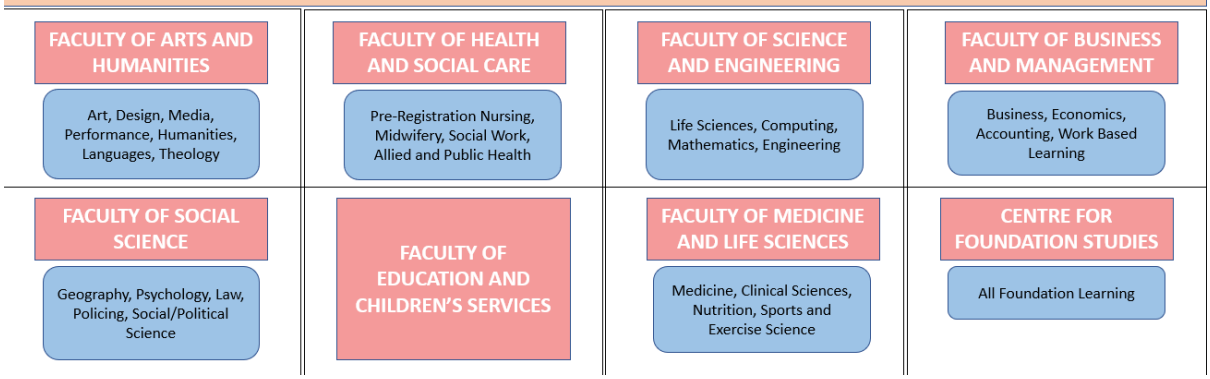
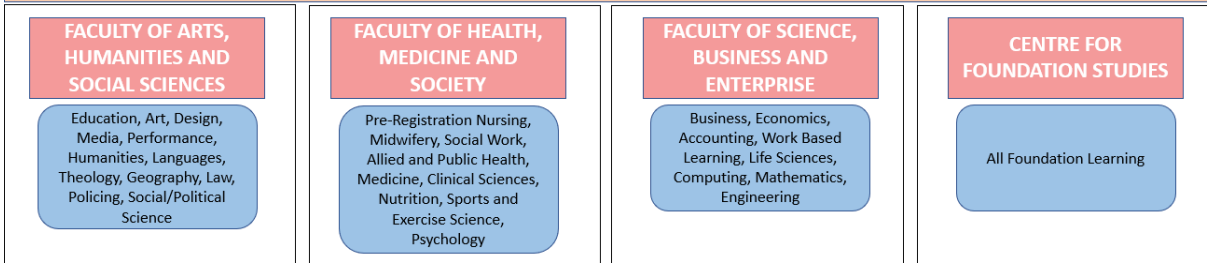


FIGURE 2: UNIVERSITY OF CHESTER: FACULTIES AND SCHOOLS (POST-JANUARY 2023 STRUCTURE)



The realigning of academic provision has necessitated a review of the professional services staff within the faculties with reporting lines and leadership roles being redefined so that there is now a clear professional services structure within each faculty, each led by a Faculty Business Manager. It was decided at an early stage to leave technical staff out of this review and to pursue any changes to technical structures through the Technician Commitment Steering Group (TCSG).

Although the Faculty Professional Services Review was not in response to the Technician Commitment, it is influencing how academic and professional services staffing are aligned

and structured. It also offers greater clarity transparency and parity around expectations of role and staff resourcing which we hope will enable improved structures and ways of working for our technician community.

This review will support recruitment, professional development, career progression, succession planning and retention of our technicians, providing for improved line management, communications, and enabling new ways of workings and cross faculty working.

Currently faculty technicians are organised and managed in a variety of ways depending on subject area (see appendix 1). Some follow clearly defined hierarchies with technicians at various grades and small technical management structures whilst others have flat or mostly flat structures and are managed directly by academic leadership within their respective disciplines. In some areas, technical teams report into administrative structures which is a practice that used to be more common at the university. There is also a disparity in the size of teams with some disciplines enjoying larger numbers of technical staff whilst there are only one or two technical staff in some subject areas. The reasons for these differences are not always clear, however in large are disciplinary driven; some areas have grown over time and simply expanded teams as student numbers and programmes have grown. Some subject areas deploy their technical staff in student facing roles and are firmly embedded with academic teams, in other areas technicians are in support roles, working "behind the scenes" and supporting the student experience depending on Faculty requirements.

The University of Chester does not have any technical staff at a senior leadership or executive level. There is a growing sense that this approach outlined above is an outdated approach and that creating technical leadership roles at School, Faculty and institution level should be considered. This is coupled with a broad desire from technical colleagues to be managed by technical managers who could be better placed to understand their unique place in the academic environment and therefore better support them in both their personal professional development and the development of the technical community as a whole.

Potential changes to the operation of the technical community is likely to challenge the reasoning behind existing technical structures; therefore being able to respect the sensibilities of those involved is crucial. It could be particularly deleterious in some subject areas where technical and academic staff work closely together and links to academia are highly valued. Where faculty administrative staff have been reorganised there has been some use of matrix management to ensure that there is a balance of input between academic and professional services; this is a potential solution for technicians moving forward.

It is difficult to clearly define which of the staff within our central professional services provision fall under the Technician Commitment. Colleagues from Learning and Information Services (LIS) are regular contributors to the TCSG and the Learning Technologists from the Centre for Academic Innovation and Development (CAID) have worked closely with faculty technicians and academic staff in collaborative projects. The ongoing valuable contributions

these teams make to the both the student experience and the scholarly activities of the university provide a clear rationale for the decision to include them in the Technician Commitment. It is also clear that although the needs of, and challenges faced by, this group are similar to those faced by faculty technicians there are also issues that are unique to this group.

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?

Where the Technician Commitment sits within the University structures has also been reviewed following the departure of the key HR lead who was overseeing it's coordination over the last couple of years. Although this has been a setback in some ways, we are approaching this as an opportunity to reconsider how we approach and support the Technician Commitment. We continue to have the valued support of HR colleagues but there is an increasing sense that we should move to a more technician led arrangement. This should not be seen as a criticism of HR but an acknowledgement of the work they have done building the confidence of the technical community and those involved with the TCSG.

Under the new arrangements the Technician Commitment is being co-ordinated by a HR colleague with a broader remit of Organisational Development *and* Equality, and they bring with them experience of supporting initiatives such as Athena SWAN and expertise in learning and development and organisational change. This is of considerable benefit to the work of the TCSG as there are some significant parallels in terms of historically underrepresented groups striving to affect change within their organisation and get their voices heard. Bringing this expertise into the TCSG has clear benefits as we look to the next three years where we hope to build on our achievements and embed cultural change within our organisation.

The TCSG is also benefiting from the support, experience and insight of the Executive Director of Human Resources who sits on both the steering group as our strategic lead and the Senior Executive Team. This has already been of notable benefit as we now have someone in the room who can share the strategic vision, make decisions, provide budget support and, as we look to the future, involve other members of the executive and leadership teams whose support will be invaluable in achieving the ambitions set out in the action plan.

In terms of engagement with the wider community there has been significant movement with technical staff now representing the University at technician commitment signatory events instead of HR for the first time and more colleagues joining and engaging with organisations such as the Technical Managers in Universities (TMU). We now also have representation with the NDTC (Trailblazer Group for the Higher Education Assistant Technician Apprenticeship). We are also seeing an increased interest from technical staff in attending events such as Higher Education Technician Summit (HETS), the TMU annual

conference, and the newly formed North West Technician Network, as well as an increasing number of more specialist opportunities. Of particular note is the engagement with arts specialist networks, which is an area the Technician Commitment is sometimes perceived as not representing well. We were part of the group who established the HEaTED Creative Practitioners Network and, with the support of Professor David McGravie, Pro-Vice Chanceller and Executive Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and Chair of CHEAD (Council for Higher Education in Art & Design), we are increasingly involved with the CHEAD Technical Alliance and forging links across the sector.

The above is making us rethink how the Technician Commitment is to be resourced both in terms of releasing colleagues from their regular duties and establishing how activities can be funded. Currently technical colleagues are engaging with the Technician Commitment as a voluntary addition to their regular duties and, as we move forward to a more technician led arrangement, this will put an additional burden onto these staff who we need to support and develop. In terms of supporting activity the Technician Commitment has no budget of its own and is reliant on funds being made available from other areas, typically HR budgets or staff development budgets held in academic departments. This has led to some disparity in support depending on cultures within the departments, competition with academic staff for funding and, worst of all, technical staff self-cancelling assuming that they would not receive support. These problems will only be exacerbated given the current financial challenges within the HE sector and seeking solutions will be a key challenge over the next three years. However, the University is firmly committed to the Technician Commitment and its ongoing delivery which will continue to be funded by HR.

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.

Please see appendix 2

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).

Events:

Since the commencement of the current action plan period (January 2021), three events have been organised at the University of Chester as a result of the previous action plan.

Technician Commitment Network event 2021

This online event, held in May 2021 showcased a range of technicians from across the University explaining the work they do at the University and featured:

* Chris Millward, Technician/ Demonstrator in (the now) Faculty of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences - *Really Virtual and Virtually Real*

* Steve Allen, Technician in (the now) Faculty of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences – *All Round Entertainment*

* Tabitha Jussa, Technician/ Demonstrator in (the now) Faculty of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences – *Agency of Women*

* Ben Stafford, Technician in (the now) Faculty of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences – *Temporary Virtual Technician*

* Dr Kate Peters, *Technician at the time, and now Lecturer, in (the now) Faculty of Science, Business and Enterprise – A novel method to optimise the utility of underused moulted plumulaceous feather samples for genetic analysis in bird conservation.*

The event also welcomed Kelly Vere MBE, Higher Education Engagement Manager and Technician Commitment Programme Director at the Science Council and Jane Banks, External Relationships Manager at the Science Council to focus on professional registration.

Involvement from the Vice Chancellor showed senior level involvement and support from the very top.

Impact: 62.5% respondents to the feedback survey on the event found the event very valuable and 25% found it valuable. 37.5 strongly agreed they took away new knowledge and ideas and 62.5% agreed. The event enabled connections, sharing of good practice, awareness of new technology and partnership working across the University.

Technician Commitment Network event 2022

This event was online on 9th June 2022 and began with a welcome from Professor Eunice Simmons, Vice-Chancellor and closed with remarks from Rashmi Patel, Strategic Director of HR and member of the University Strategic Executive Team, again showing top level support for and commitment to this agenda. Kelly Vere joined us again to provide a Technician Commitment update and Jane Banks joined us again to discuss professional registration and HEATED representatives also provided an update.

The event featured a range of showcases including

* Rich Hind, Learning Technologist, LIS – *Nobody puts H5P in the corner - Asynchronous Learning Material For The Performing Arts*

* Stephanie Watkins, Laboratory Technician, Clinical Sciences & Nutrition – *Design and validation of a food frequency questionnaire to determine dietary intake of vitamin D*

* Shirley Lang, Sensory Panel Leader at NoWFOOD – *Introduction to Sensory Science*

* Dr Amy Morgan, Research Support Technical Officer, Science & Engineering – *Electrochemical Detection of DNA Methylation as a Sensor for Cancer*

* Jakub Gacka, Senior Technical Officer, Science & Engineering – *From the concept to reality, the impact of Design & Manufacturing Suite on innovation in research and student creativity.*

* Michal Zatrak, Technician/Demonstrator, Mike Green, Technician/Demonstrator, Laurence Goosey, Technician/Demonstrator, Dewi Ford, PhD Student *Biological Sciences: Putting the Zoo into Zoology*.

TechFest 2023

This event, held in June 2023 and our first in-person event of this kind, started with a welcome to the day with Rashmi Patel, Executive Director of HR and member of the University Strategic Executive Team, again showing senior level involvement and support from the very top. The Event was also actively supported with contributions form Professor Paul Bissell, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation and Professor of Public Health.

Kelly Vere MBE, Higher Education Engagement Manager and Technician Commitment Programme Director at the Science Council joined us again to explain more about the Technician Commitment, highlighting the benefits and exciting sector developments.

We were keen focus on career development and career pathways, so the event included TCSG member Tom Hignett in conversation with Ben Broughton, Head of Division – Communication, Screen and Performance and Alan Summers, Senior Lecturer, Art and Design both of whom worked in technician roles before moving onto their current roles. The three discussed the move from a technician role into an academic role.

Impact: This section resulted in 54% of respondents to the event feedback survey agreeing and 27.5% strongly agreeing that TechFest highlighted career progression opportunities for Technicians.

Jane Banks, External Relationships Manager at the Science Council contributed to the event again, but this time interviewed two of our technicians who had recently been awarded professional registration highlighting the benefits of Professional Recognition to all attendees. This resulted in 100% of respondents to the event feedback survey agreeing/ strongly agreeing that TechFest showed ways Technicians can be supported to gain recognition through professional registration and external award scheme.

After lunch, Professor Paul Bissell, Pro Vice-Chancellor Research & Innovation spoke, highlighting and demonstrating the close links between the Technician Commitment work and research at the University of Chester

Matt Palmer, Technician in Sport and Exercise Sciences and TCSG member ran a session in which he demonstrated the way 3d MoCap had been used.

We were pleased to welcome Professor Ian Prior, Associate Pro Vice Chancellor, Technology Infrastructure and Environment Directorate (HLS) and NWCR Professor of Molecular

Oncology at the University of Liverpool to share the University of Liverpool Research Technical Professional career pathway with attendees before Martin Morlidge, Head of Commercial Operations, University of Chester closed the day and gave thanks to our technical community and contributors.

There were two opportunities for attendees to experience the wide range of technical settings that support students at UoC on a daily basis this included Biological Sciences' Lab Managers showcasing PCR in a box – a completely portable 'mini-lab' that can be used to run a complete PCR experiment from start to finish and 'Dog anatomy', large toy dogs that have been adapted to allow people to learn correct anatomical terminology, alongside a 3D dog anatomy software that has recently been adopted. There was an opportunity to visit the new Nursing Simulation Suites. These connected clinical spaces represent the journey a patient/service user would take when navigating the health and social care system. Combining Immersive Theatre theory and practice with simulation training to create a truly immersive learning environment, come along to see electric profiling beds, patient simulators and more. The University's VR Cave was demonstrated by the Audio-Visual Development and Support Manager and the Education Science Lab showcased how the Technicians in the School of Education make Practical School Science creative and exciting for the science teachers of the future.

There were also several information stands available including HEaTED, Unison, Professional recognition, Training Opportunities, Sustainability and Health and Safety.

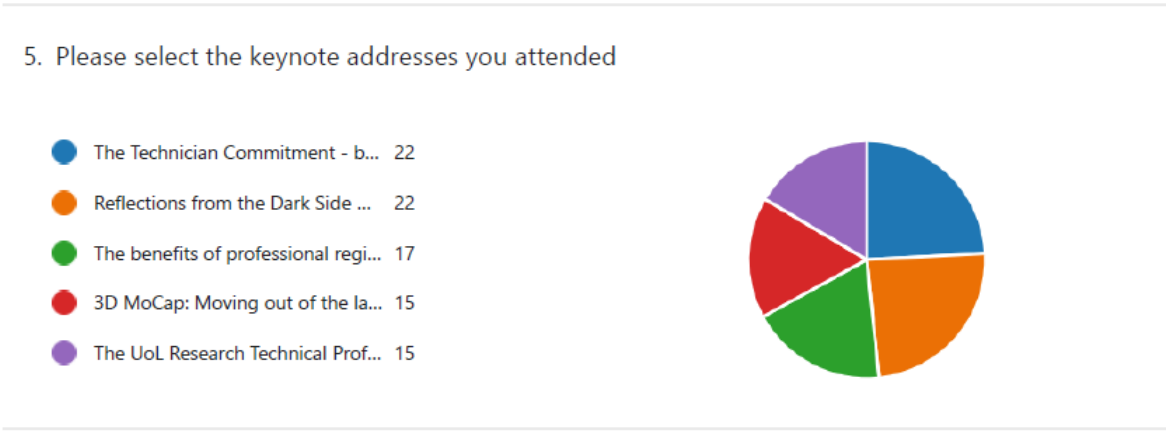
Impact: 59% of respondents to the event feedback survey agreed and 27% strongly agreed that TechFest ensured that the contribution of technicians in the University of Chester (UoC) is visible within and beyond UoC and 18% strongly agreed and 45.5 agreed TechFest worked to ensure the future sustainability of technical skills.

Where respondents disagreed, this has been fed into the forward-looking action plan, along with the free text responses.

All of these events over the last few years have provided excellent networking and development opportunities for our technical community as well as helping to raise the visibility and profile of the excellent work carried out by Technician as Chester to support our students, as well as academic and research endeavours.

Figure 3: TechFest 2023 Advertisement

Figure 4 a)-d): Feedback from the TechFest 2023 Impact Survey



6. Please provide feedback on any or all of the keynotes listed above.

11
Responses

Latest Responses

4 respondents (**36%**) answered **career** for this question.

7. Which of the breakout room activities did you attend?

PCR in a box and Dog Anatomy	5
Nursing Simulation Suites	11
VR Cave	13
Education Science Lab	7

8. Please provide feedback on the breakout room activities you attended

16
Responses

Latest Responses

"Very enjoyable experences. It showcased some great examples of tech being ...

6 respondents (**38%**) answered **interesting** for this question.

Figure 5: Article included in staff Magazine *Forum* to celebrate the success of TechFest 2023

TechFest 2023 – excellence and innovation

THIS year's TechFest brought together some of the brightest and best who have been supported thanks to the University's vision for technical excellence and the pursuit of innovation and career growth.

Held at the Riverside Innovation Centre, the event was a significant milestone as part of the Technician Commitment, bringing together technical staff, academics, professional services, students, and visitors from other universities.

The Technician Commitment, which has support from sector bodies such as the Science Council and the Gatsby Foundation, has a simple yet profound goal: to enhance the visibility, recognition, career development, and sustainability of technicians across all disciplines in higher education and research.

Here are some highlights from the event:

1. Professional recognition success stories: Jane Banks, External Relationships Manager at the Science Council, had an insightful conversation with Jessica Vaughan-Foulkes, Clinical Skills Technician, and Stephanie Watkins, Technician/Demonstrator in Biological Sciences. They shared their experiences of achieving professional recognition in their respective fields and the many benefits it brings.

2. Career progression insights: Professor Ian Prior, Associate Pro Vice Chancellor at the University of Liverpool, provided valuable insights into the Research Technical Professional career pathway. Matt Palmer, a Technician in Sport and Exercise Sciences, delved into the fascinating world of 3D MoCap. Additionally, Ben Broughton, Head of Music, Media, and Performance, and Alan Summers, Senior Lecturer in Art and Design, shared their inspiring journeys from technician roles to academic positions.

3. Technician Commitment's Impact: Kelly Vere MBE, Higher Education Engagement Manager and Technician Commitment Programme Director at the Science Council, emphasised the significance of the Technician Commitment and its far-reaching benefits for the sector. She also shared some exciting developments on the horizon.

20 Forum

4. Hands-on experience: Attendees had the chance to get hands-on with practical sessions showcasing the incredible work of the University's technicians. The School of Education wowed with their innovative approach to making practical school science exciting for future teachers, complete with explosive experiments.

5. Cutting-edge demonstrations: Staff in Biological Sciences, demonstrated a portable 'mini-lab' displaying the polymerase chain reaction (PCR), a widely-used method for rapid DNA sample replication while colleagues from the University's nursing simulation suites showcased electric profiling beds, patient simulators, and virtual reality cases, offering immersive experiences that left a lasting impression.

Rashmi Patel, Technician Commitment Strategic Lead and Strategic Director of HR, said: "Our technical workforce is an integral part of Chester's high-quality teaching, learning and research community especially as the practical element of programmes becomes even increasingly more important. They are central to the delivery, and achievement of our Citizen Student Strategy.

"It was fantastic to see how much is happening and all the great equipment and innovations we have at the University, as well as the true extent of the professionalism, knowledge, and expertise of our technicians."

University Website

Whilst there is a page on the University's Corporate Website highlighting UoC's commitment to this area of work, here, the TCSG would like to develop this further. Action V1 seeks to address this.

Professional Registration

Three staff have applied for and been granted professional registration, one of whom has left. The others are highlighted below:

Katy Gough, Clinical Skills Technician in the Faculty of Health, Medicine and Society said; "*Completing the RSciTech application was a lengthy process, but was a valuable lesson in reflection and evaluating my skills"*

Figure 6: Professional Recognition Award

ASPiH
ASSOCIATION FOR SIMULATED PRACTICE IN HEALTHCARE

Certificate of Award

Presented to:

Katy Gough - SC00043324

(RSci Tech)

On:

17th January 2024

Della Freeth
Chief Executive
Science Council

Charles Everard
Executive Committee Member
Association for Simulated Practice in Healthcare

Figure 7: An article in staff magazine *Forum* to promote both TechFest and Jessica's professional registration achievement

Jessica Vaughan-Foulkes.

TechFest case study

JESSICA Vaughan-Foulkes is a Clinical Skills Technician working on the Pre-registration Nursing programme as part of the skills and simulation team based at the University Centre Birkenhead and University Centre Warrington sites.

As part of her role, she maintains equipment and technology for simulation teaching at Marriss House and Sarah Parker Remond House, handles procurement, support day-to-day simulation operations, and providing staff training.

Making simulation suites immersive and considering diversity in equipment purchases is a vital part of her role and she is specially trained in creating fake wounds for practice. She also facilitates outreach sessions with schools, including an 'Escape Room' experience.

Jessica is part of the Technician community and recently became professionally registered as an RSciTech, aligned with APSiH standards.

Here she shares what the process has been like and what it means to her:

"This has been a fantastic experience and this accreditation gives me recognition for what I do and demonstrates my commitment to integrity within my role.

"Going through the application process has given me a new confidence in my abilities and knowledge. The self-reflection aspect has been an eye opener for me as I realised just how much I have achieved in my time here at the University. It's something I will continue to do moving forward for that reason.

"Professional registration also brings recognition for my team; we work hard to provide high-quality, immersive simulation to students and together with the other members of my team who are professionally registered, I take great pride in what we accomplish.

"Being involved in the Technician Commitment project so far has allowed me to see just how integral technicians are within the finer workings of University life. It's uplifting and encouraging to hear how this project has increased awareness and how it is opening new doors for technicians in different departments.

"For those who aren't sure whether professional registration with the Science Council is for them, I would encourage them to really look into what is involved and consider how it will benefit their role. It has certainly benefitted me and I am glad I pushed myself to complete the application."

Jess was also part of the recent Aurora cohort, whose stories are shared on Pages 10 and 11.

Lanyards

To enhance the visibility of Technicians across the University, Technician lanyards have been procured as part of the group's work. In lab areas, branded lab coats are worn by technical staff and branded polo shirts are worn by staff in LIS

Figure 8 a) and b): Members of the TCSG showcase the pink Technician lanyards

Committee involvement

The previous action plans have impacted on the committee involvement of Technicians across the University with membership of:

* **Technician Commitment Steering Group** – the varied membership of the group has allowed Technicians from disparate areas of the University to bring perspectives from their own disciplines both scientific and non-scientific, academic and industry-focussed, personal perspectives and perspectives from other roles they may hold (such as Trade Union representatives)

* **Site Operations Meetings** at all campuses. Established by senior leaders, Technician attendance at these meetings has been invaluable in improving communications between faculty staff and central operations staff and highlighted issues perhaps not immediately obvious to non-technical staff.

* **Faculty Health and Safety Committees**. In many Faculties, Technician involvement has significantly improved the safety culture and is improving historic strained relationships between H&S Services and the faculties whilst also facilitating sharing of best practice between schools/divisions within the faculty.

* **Student Voice Meetings**- enabling closer links between the service Technicians provide and our customers.

* **Education Technology Forum** – the Technician Commitment work ensured the explicit inclusion of technicians in the Student Education Plan and as such opportunities were created for technical staff to sit on this committee. There have so far only been two meetings, but this has already had in impact in terms of sharing relevant information as well as opportunities to share good practice with the wider university.

* **Division Teaching and Learning working group** and module/programme development teams. Based on best practice from Edinburgh College of Art. Having more technical staff involved at this point will make the process more efficient as well as improving how the programmes integrate the practical aspects of the new courses.

* **HEaTED Arts Working Group** and **HEaTED Creative Practitioners Network**

* **Membership of School Committees** including General School Meetings, Research Committee, Teaching Committee and Health & Safety Committee. Technicians use their membership on these committees to ensure that the technical team is represented in matters that affect the school and to communicate technical news and information to the wider School.

* **Member of Technical Managers in Universities network** this is helpful for troubleshooting and sharing job opportunities. Future attendance at the annual conference will be helpful to attend in the future.

* **Timetabling Forum**, as school timetabling contact, this allows more effective planning of lab classes with relation to facilities and equipment.

* **School Ethics Committee**. Technician involvement ensures all dissertation students (UG and PG) have theses which are resourced suitably.

* **Knowledge Exchange Management Group**. A key member of the TCSG is the Public Engagement and Impact (PE&I) Champion for the School of Natural Sciences and attends these meetings to collaborate with other PE&I Champions and bring new knowledge exchange ideas to the table.

* **Hedgehog Friendly Campus Campaign** – A key member of the TCSG has been the UoC Hedgehog Champion for 4 years and attends regular meetings with the rest of the group regarding events and fundraisers.

* **Biodiversity Action Group** – A key member of the TCSG has recently been invited to join the Sustainability team's Biodiversity Action Group. This is a group that focuses on the flora and fauna on our campuses and what impact we are having on wildlife and plant species populations and what we can do to increase wildlife populations.

* **HTA Committee (Research)** - A key member of the TCSG has recently been made a person designated on the school's HTA license under the research provision and attends regular meetings to action improvements and ensure all department staff are working within the correct guidelines.

* **Education Technology Forum** –Opportunities were created for technical staff to sit on this committee in the School of Education. There have so far only been two meetings, but this has already had in impact in terms of sharing relevant information as well as opportunities to share good practice from my team with the wider university, particularly related to Moodle/VLE development.

* **School of Education Learning, Teaching & Assessment Sub Committee** – Technician involvement here provides a technical perspective in terms of VLE, assessment methods etc.

* **NDTC Trailblazer Group for the Higher Education Assistant Technician Apprenticeship** – A key member of the TCSG joined this group last year and attended a review meeting where the training provider was present. This provided a great opportunity to explain how this apprenticeship could be of use at UoC but also to look at how others have implemented it.

Relevant development undertaken

The previous action plans have impacted on the development of Technicians across the University with Technicians achieving the following:

* **RSciTech** – application and membership leading to ASPiH membership.

* **WBIS Leadership & Management in HE** – Several Technicians have completed this in house, accredited programme. One Technician who is undertaking this said: *"This has been invaluable in exposing me to a wide range of ideas and approaches to management both generally and with a focus on HE. The running theme of self-reflection has been particularly useful so as well as understanding the business better I am also coming to understand myself better."* Another stated: *"This has helped me to identify different management styles and how best to adopt them and manage my team most effectively."*

* **CHEAD (Council for Higher Education in Art & Design) Technical Leadership Programme** – this was the first time this programme has been delivered and a key member of the TCSG was on the pilot programme. They said: *"It was an interesting counterpoint to our internal training as being focussed on tech staff in arts subjects the approach was more human centred and less corporate. The biggest impact for me in this programme was being exposed*

to colleagues from other art schools at various stages in their careers and learning from their own experiences."

* A further key member of the TCSG participated in the pilot programme **Herschel Women in Technical Leadership**. She said, *"This was a really worthwhile opportunity – this gave me confidence in my communications with other technical staff and more senior management; I learnt about leadership styles, negotiation skills and team management."*

* Outdoor First Aid Training for field trips and any outreach events off campus.

Attendance at events

The previous action plans have enabled Technicians across the University to get involved in the planning and attendance of more events, including:

***** The **North West Technician's Network** which many of our technicians attend to promote knowledge exchange, sharing placement opportunities, development opportunities across the region and networking.

* **HEaTED Creative Practitioner Network** event

* **HETS** - The biggest of UK technical events, this biennial offering presented attendees from UoC with a huge overview of goings on in the technical landscape as well as excellent networking opportunities. Notably closer links with the University of Liverpool have come from this and the TMU where we have been able to source speakers for our TechFest events and have explored the possibility of sharing resources elsewhere.

* **TMU (Technical Managers in Universities)** Conference (Liverpool 2023 and Glasgow 2024). Although this network has a more STEM bias, it is also the most active technical network in the UK. There are regular discussions about nationwide technical issues, notably career pathways recently, as well as more specialist issues which TCSG members have been able to feed into other teams such as the sustainability and H&S teams. Being part of this mailing list also enables TCSG members to stay abreast of the updates and challenges happening across the sector.

* **Technician Commitment Signatory Events** (London Sept 23 and Cardiff May 24). These were the first of these events where technical staff have represented UoC. They have been valuable in making attendees more aware of the many activities and successes of the Technician Commitment which has been empowering. Attendance has been beneficial to gain valuable advice from Technician Commitment leads from other HEIs about how to approach our resubmission. They have been valuable in making attendees more aware of the many activities and successes of the Technician Commitment which has been empowering. One attendee said "*Being able to make links with other technicians across the country has been interesting. I reported back to the Steering Group on the presentations given and any relevant information provided."* The University will continue to support these events and send representations to the November 2024 event.

* **CHEAD (Council for Higher Education Art & Design) Technical Alliance**. Engagement with CHEAD both through these events and other events has been exceptionally valuable in being

able to see how other HEIs operate and being able to compare our own practice. Feeding back to the wider TCSG where appropriate and helping them establish connections with colleagues across the UK where there is the potential for shared practice.

* **IST Annual Conference (London 2023)**. This was of interest for the usual range of networking reasons, but this one was of particular interest as it saw the launch of new professional registration routes for Arts Practitioners as well as Artificial Intelligence. This has been fed back to colleagues where appropriate and some are considering pursuing. One attendee said: *"This was my first attendance at such an event and there was a wide range of disciplines and knowledge there. The opportunity to network meant meeting technicians from a wide range of backgrounds. This led me to join the TMU network."*

* **ALT Network** – Association for Learning Technology. As an associate member, this gives access to a mailing list which has been beneficial in information gathering for VLE activities.

* As some members of the TCSG are in line management positions, they regularly provide opportunities for staff in their technical teams to attend CPD activities with providers such as **MI Talent.**

Involvement in key projects

The previous action plans have enabled Technicians across the University to get more involved in key projects, including:

* **Technician Network Events (TechFest)**. All TCSG members have been part of the organising Teams for the three events, with all contributing to the organisation of the events. TCSG members delivered keynote addresses, arranged activities for stands, hosted events and workshops, both online and in person. TCSG members were responsible for increased engagement from their own areas, especially in terms of technicians presenting their own work.

***School of Education** relocation project board. At UoC, The School of Education is currently moving from one site to another. A key member of the TCSG was invited to be on the project board for their understanding of the way the department works and the needs of the department in terms of lab spaces, rooms and resources. The impact has been the facilitation of the refurbishment of our new building and improved communication between the School of Education and wider University departments involved.

* Assisting a member of the technical team write a successful **grant application** for a technician lead research project with the RSPCA.

* Involvement with the **Hedgehog Friendly Campus Campaign** alongside student co-ordinators to make a difference to hedgehog populations on campus and also to help students to build their leadership skills.

* Organisation of two successful **BioBlitz events** at Cholmondeley Castle. This is an outreach event for families to attend, the most recent event had over 600 attendees.

* **Project** with Edinburgh College of Art (ECA) through CHEAD Technical Alliance exploring differences in being a technician at universities of differing size. Presented at University of West England, Bristol, June 2024. Well-received and generated a lot of conversations about the diverse nature of technical roles and the value of generalist and specialist staff.

* **HEaTED Arts/Creative Practitioners Network** – Having identified a paucity of provision in the sector for technicians in creative disciplines, colleagues from UK art schools, a key member of the TCSG approached various established organisations to help establish a specialist network. HEaTED agreed and as part of the working group, a UoC technician helped to establish the network and organise early events. The network has now largely been superseded by the CHEAD Technical alliance but is still a valuable network, particularly for institutions who are not part of CHEAD.

Communication

The creation of a teams site called *Our Technical Community* which has all Technicians across the University as member allows for wider communication of initiatives arising from the Technician Commitment work, the events and surveys.

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

Although we are aware of the MITalent recommendations and have on occasion referred to them and some action points and accomplishments align, this is not by design; if we are being honest, they have not historically informed our action plans or approach. This is a significant oversight on our part and as we come to this review point it is becoming apparent that these recommendations have the potential to guide us in making the transformational changes that can support us in achieving the ambitions set out in our action plan so these will become a central pillar of our future work. There are some frustrating examples in the action plan of where the TCSG have made what appeared to be important changes only to discover that over time areas have drifted back to the status quo. We had made changes more often as an exception or at a transactional level but failed to change the prevailing culture, something we recognise and will be addressing as part of the renewed action plan.

For example, there are several actions within the plan with a theme of technical colleagues wanting to have their voices heard within decision making processes or that could be potentially resolved with better representation. This resonates with the recommendation R12 which calls for inclusion of technical voices on institution or sector level decision making committees and boards. We have found more often than not that when we advocate to have technical voices in the decision-making process they are welcomed and consistently recognised as valuable contributors, but it is still a rare occurrence for technical staff to be

included by default (except for H&S committees where the situation is reversed, which is a problem in its own right.)

It is important also to recognise that this culture change isn't just about how the organisational culture values technical staff but also in how technical staff value themselves. Recommendation R15 - Technical staff should engage positively with current and future opportunities that are available to them – is crucial; not just for the success of the technical staff themselves or for the technician commitment but also for the institution in having this valuable and overlooked group engaging confidently where they can have impact. There are some who view the Technician Commitment as something to be done *for* technicians, or worse, done *to* technicians. The Technician Commitment, ultimately, needs to be done *by* technicians for technicians and this is about changing mindsets and building confidence.

Notwithstanding the above, this section has promoted us to review the recommendations and further develop the action plan and the table below links the recommendations with our current and future actions.

MI Talent Recommendation	**How UoC is enacting the recommendations** (note – all reference to R in this column refers to the UoC Action Plan 2024-2027)
R1- Employ a strategic approach to ensure the sustainability and appropriateness of technical skills and careers, at both a local and national level. This includes succession planning in individual organisations, investment in a new pipeline of technical talent and horizon scanning new and emerging technologies and skills.	See action R1, C2
R2 - recognise the blurring of boundaries between technical and academic roles. They should provide opportunities and mechanisms to move between career pathways and across sectors.	See action C2, C8
R3 - collect, report and analyse data on their technical workforce, with careful consideration of those roles at the interface with academic roles.	See appendix 4 See action S4
R4 undertake targeted and specific action to address the equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) challenges facing the technical community.	Close links with Athena Swan action plan See action S5
R5 - provide clear and consistent guidance to ensure technical contributions are costed appropriately and eligibility requirements for existing funding opportunities should be reviewed to ensure inclusion of technical staff where appropriate.	See action R5
R6 - support outreach and public engagement activities regarding technical careers in local schools and colleges to increase visibility of technical career opportunities to young people.	See V5
R7 - broaden access to technical careers in the sector by utilising and expanding entry routes to include both vocational and academic pathways.	See S1
R8 - ensure inclusion of technical expertise within end-to-end recruitment processes when hiring for technical roles.	See S6
R9 - ensure visibility of clearly defined career pathways and progression routes, with accurate and standardised job descriptions for technical roles.	See C2

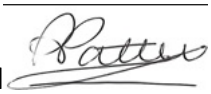
R10 - ensure provision and access to a range of professional development opportunities tailored to technical roles and careers.	See C2, C4, S2, R1, R4
R11 - ensure the contributions of technical staff are visible and recognised.	See R1, R5
R12 - ensure technical staff sit on appropriate institution- and sector-level decision-making committees and boards to ensure these groups reflect the community they represent and to provide diversity of views and expertise	See Committee section of this document. See V8
R13 - form partnerships with organisations and initiatives that provide technical and vocational training	See C4
R14 - Government policymakers should ensure the inclusion of technical staff in consultations on sector-level policy, for example through invitations to roundtables and consultations.	n/a for UoC action
R15 - Technical staff should engage positively with current and future opportunities that are available to them.	Continuing through the Technician Commitment work and events See V3
R16 - The TALENT Commission advises the creation of a new collaborative entity, provisionally to be called the UK Institute for Technical Skills & Strategy [working title] that builds on the multi-stakeholder approach of the Technician Commitment, to represent and provide a conduit to the technical community, advising government, sector initiatives, funding bodies and other organisations.	n/a for UoC action but pleased to see this has been achieved and looking forward to working with ITSS colleagues in the future

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.

See appendix 3

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.chester.ac.uk/about/jobs/technician-commitment-initiative/

Signed 

Rashmi Patel, Strategic Director of Human Resources (Technician Commitment Nominated Institutional Lead)

Date: 25/7/2024

Signed

Professor Eunice Simmons

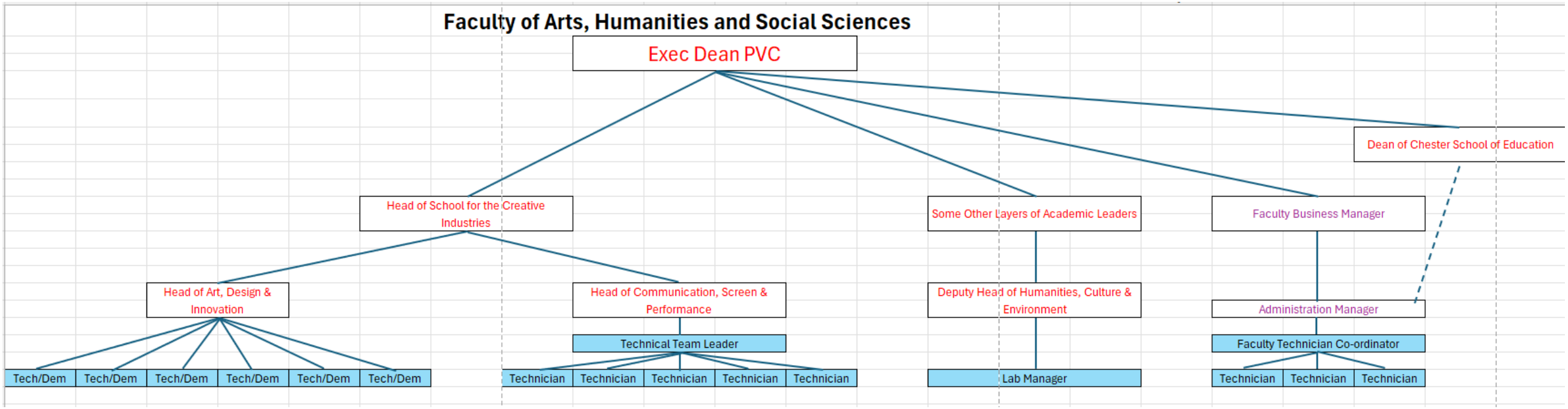
BSc, MSc, PGCE, FRSB, FRSA, PFHEA

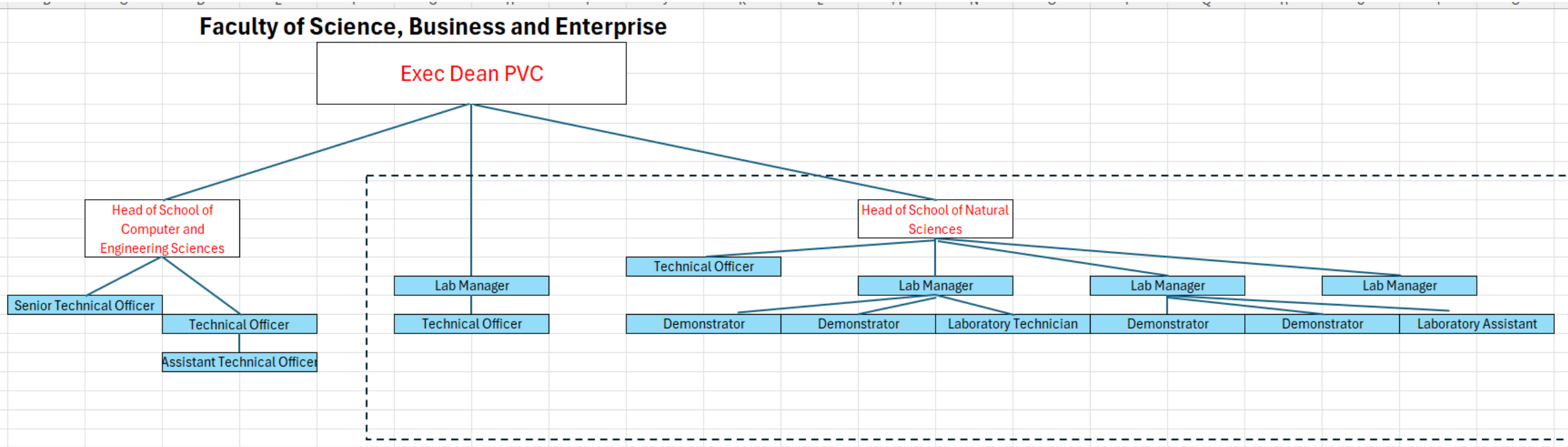
Vice-Chancellor & Principal

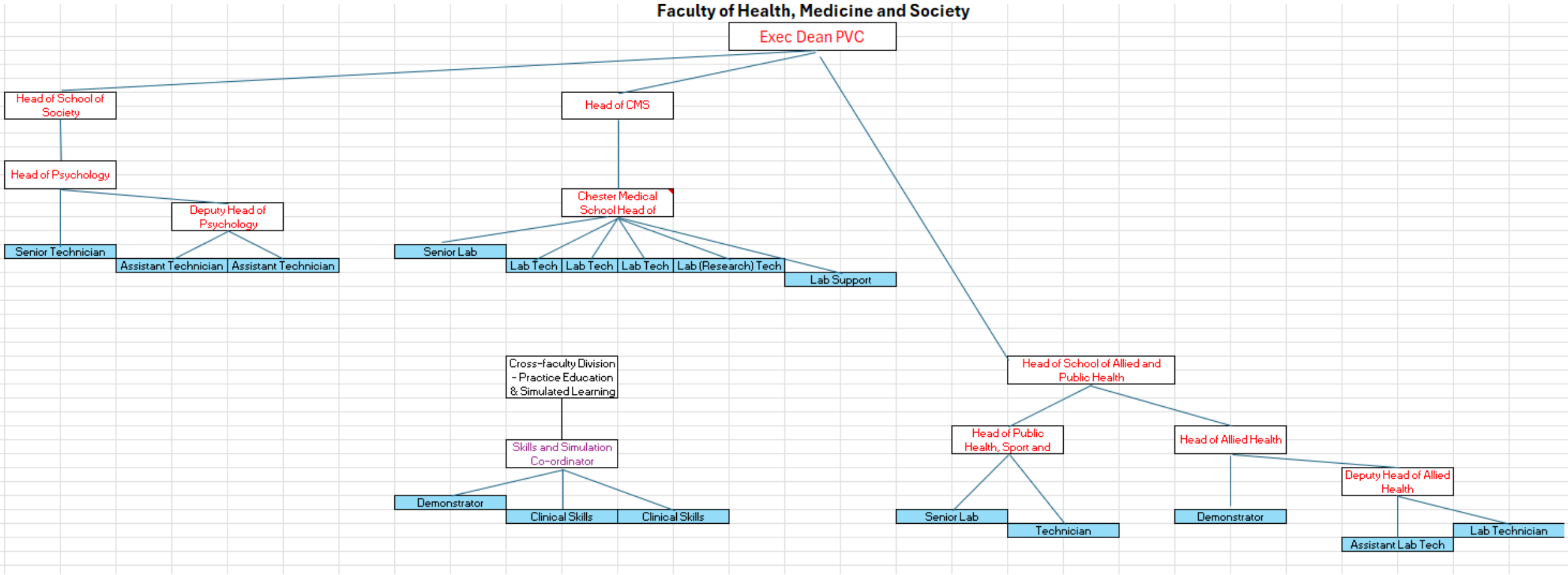
(Technician Commitment Signatory – Leader of Institution)

Date: 25/7/24

Appendix 1 – Faculty organisation charts




Faculty of Science, Business and Enterprise
Exec Dean PVC
Head of School of Computer and Engineering Sciences
Senior Technical Officer
Technical Officer
Assistant Technical Officer
Lab Manager
Technical Officer
Head of School of Natural Sciences
Technical Officer
Lab Manager
Demonstrator
Demonstrator
Laboratory Technician
Lab Manager
Demonstrator
Lab Manager
Demonstrator
Laboratory Assistant



Appendix 1 - Faculty Organisation Charts

APPENDIX 2- UNIVERSITY OF CHESTER TECHNICIAN COMMITMENT ACTION PLAN: JANUARY 2021 TO DECEMBER 2023

THEME	ITEM	ACTION	TIMESCALE	COMMENTS
VISIBILITY: Ensure that all technicians within the organisation are identifiable and that the contribution of the technicians is visible within and beyond the institution	V1	Establish location of Technicians and Physical Environment to ensure visibility and storage space is optimal and whether any improvements are needed/can be made	Year 1	• Technician lanyards available to all technician • Departmental newsletters • Technician Staff profiles on the wall of some University buildings. • Logoed lab coats for lab-based technicians
	V2	Facilitate Technician Photo and Profile information on Portal and on Corporate Website; to include information about their roles; latest kit; expertise etc.	Year 1 (Phase 2)	Symplectic Elements manages the profiles for all academic staff as well as professional services staff undertaking or otherwise supporting Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE) at University of Chester. Technicians are included in this.
	V3	Establish an internal annual Technician Conference/Networking event which will also provide an opportunity to celebrate achievements.	Year 1, 2 & 3 (Phase 1)	First event was held virtually on 27th May 2021 Second event was held on 9th Third event held in person in June 2023
	V4	Facilities and Estates to Involve Technicians where appropriate at planning stages of any projects that involve structural changes to rooms or would impact on Technicians' provision	Year 1 (Phase 1)	Some progress, including Technicians sitting as members on some site Operational Groups. Involvement of Education Technicians in significant site move. More work needed. To be carried forward
	V5	Collaboration with other HEIs to share ideas and to provide networking/support opportunities	Year 1, 2 & 3 (Phase 1)	• Other Universities have been invited to join all UoC technician conferences Involvement in • NWHE Technician network • HETS (Higher Education Technicians Summit) 4th July 2023 University of Warwick • Technical Leadership events:

				• CHEAD Technical Alliance • HCPN (HEaTED Creative Practitioner Network) • TechxFest (Technical careers event) – 2nd March 2023 – Derby Arena
	V6	A visual display to be created to show Technician Achievements alongside TC submission award plaque	Year 1 (Phase 2)	To be carried forward
	V7	The skills, expertise and contributions technicians make need to be shared with students, academics and other non-technical professional services staff to raise awareness of the importance of their roles in relation to teaching and research	Year 1 (Phase 2)	To be carried forward
	V8	Explore opportunities for Technicians to engage with activities that take place in the community, schools and colleges e.g. Widening Participation? Outreach? Civic Responsibilities?	Year 2 (Phase 1)	Examples of work Technicians have been doing was communicated to all staff in Staff Magazine, Forum in May 2021. Further work planned in this area.
	V9	Explore opportunities for Technicians to engage with and contribute towards new initiatives and longer-term projects – middle managers were perceived to be a barrier to encouraging/enabling project engagement	Year 1 (Phase 2)	To be carried forward
RECOGNITION: Support technicians to gain recognition through professional registration	R1	Obtain case studies to facilitate operational clarification of roles and responsibilities of Technicians alongside academics	Year 1 (Phase 2)	To be carried forward
	R2	Review/consider a change in Job Title for Technicians e.g. Technical Officers vs Technicians - other possible titles – Technologist? Technical Leaders? Technical Specialist? Technical Expert?	Year 1 (Phase 2)	Work was undertaken toward this action, however roll out was unsuccessful. To be carried forward
	R3	Deliver demonstrations throughout the year either face to face and/or using videos on	Year 1 (Phase 2)	Achieved via TechFests and carried forward to be embedded further

		Portal; information can be integrated into the Annual Learning Calendar managed by HR		
	R4	Recognise that time is needed for AV/LIS to do their jobs; this relates to providing sufficient notice and providing sufficient time to do their jobs – explore scenarios	Year 1 (Phase 2)	To be carried forward
	R5	Explore flexibility and legitimacy of pay related reward structures for Technicians in terms of: • Competitiveness with respect to external company pay rates • Recognising individual expertise/skills profile • Recognising those who consistently exceed role requirements • Qualifications	Year 1/2	As per R1
	R6	Awards Scheme for staff to nominate staff to be established for all roles across the University: • Technicians to be identified as a specific job family	Year 1/2	Existing 1839 Student Award Scheme has a category of Academic Support Staff which includes Technicians - a Technician received an award in 2020 To be carried forward for further development
	R7	Professional Registration – more information needs to be provided with respect to the types of professional body Technicians may want to register with e.g. by scientific discipline; industry sector; type of employment; type of employee; skill used: https://sciencecouncil.org/scientists-science-technicians/which-professional-membership-body-is-right-for-me/ Professional Registration – signpost Technicians to individuals who have already gone through	Year 1 (Phase 1)	Three staff have acquired professional registration, fully funded by the university.

		the PR process to provide support/advice for others who wish to apply Professional Registration – establish a support network through the Employer Champion scheme facilitated by the Science Council		
	R8	Orientation process for Technicians which includes information about Professional Registration, Technician Commitment etc.	Year 1 (Phase 1)	Newly appointed/promoted staff are signposted to the Technician Commitment Portal pages via the online orientation process To be carried forward for further development
	R9	Introduce a bonus scheme for Technicians who take on extra responsibilities	Year 1/2	As per R1
CAREER DEVELOPMENT: Enable career progression opportunities for technicians through the provision of clear, documented career pathways	C1	Develop case studies to understand perceived excessive acting up (managing but not being employed as a manager).	Year 1	As per R1
	C2	Develop a University wide Career Pathways framework which will include all job families including Technicians; consider implications of developing a level playing field for Professional Services progression and Academic progression i.e. not limited to promotional opportunities when vacancies arise; invest in the CATTs HEaTED software in support of career progression; integrate Apprenticeships into pathway framework; consider employing Technicians as VLs who may be pursuing an academic career which would also support them to complete the PG Cert in T&L in HE	Year 1/2/3	As per R1
	C3	Develop a Technicians Technical Skills Matrix at team/departmental/ faculty levels – possibly institutional wide Skills matrix to support updating of skills, enable sharing of	Year 1,2 & 3 (Phase 1)	Example skills matrix has been designed for Biological Sciences. To be carried forward for further development

		skills/knowledge, application of skills/shadowing others, broadening skills and proactively developing staff in their roles and in support of career progression		
	C4	1) Staff Planning Framework, 2) Talent Management and Succession Policy would contribute towards proactive career development	Year 1/2	Some progress. To be carried forward for further development
	C5	Establish Career Mentors for Technicians	Year 1 (Phase 1)	A Technician Mentoring Portal page is available to publicise those from our technical community who would like to be a mentor to others To be carried forward for further development
	C6	Career Discussions – provide guidance and resources to managers to facilitate effective career conversations	Year 1 (Phase 1)	Managing Your Career Guidance, available via Portal from March 2021 provides information about effective career conversations and additional training provided to all managers via PDP training.
SUSTAINABILITY: Ensure the future sustainability of technical skills across the organisation and that technical expertise is fully utilised	S1	To facilitate succession planning, vacancies are to be advertised initially internally where appropriate	Year 1 (Phase 1)	Completed and embedded
	S2	Use Skills Matrix (C3) to keep up to date on new techniques and to facilitate multi-skilling where possible across the University	Year 1/2/3	As per C3
	S3	Establish a Training database of upcoming training for Technicians – practice in different departments; share on Technician Hub on Portal	Year 1/2	A Team site entitled Our Technical Community has been established for communication with all Technical staff. HEaTED updates are communicated to technical community regularly
	S4	Fully Integrate Apprenticeships into the employment lifecycle of Technicians i.e. not just at the recruitment stage	Year 1/2/	Apprenticeship opportunities are communicated to all staff. To be carried forward for further development
	S5	Explore opportunities for Technicians to Mentor/Buddy other Technicians to transfer skills, knowledge and expertise to more junior member of staff or apprentices	Year 1	A Technician Mentoring Portal page is available to publicise those from our technical community who would like to be a mentor to others

				To be carried forward for further development
	S6	Explore barriers/opportunities to enable sharing of expertise and collaboration between Faculties and Departments - any other ideas than network event and uploading recordings/demos to TC Portal pages	Year 1/2	Our Technical Community Teams site created. Job Shadowing Procedure launched in July 22 Temporary Reassignment Procedure launched in July 22
	S7	Managers need to understand what Technicians bring to the table – supporting managers to support Technicians	Year 1	To be carried forward
	S8	Expanding skills, knowledge, expertise – workload was identified as the biggest barrier – explore opportunities e.g. placements/job shadowing	Year 1/2	Managing Your Career Guide and Job Shadowing Procedure launched in July 22 Temporary Reassignment Procedure and Secondment Procedure to help manage workload peaks and troughs and providing opportunities to experience other roles/departments To be carried forward for further development

Overarching Actions:

Steering Group established and meets on average monthly; summary of meeting actions is published on Portal pages

Communicate Progress against action plan annually – a progress report was communicated to staff in June 2020; a further update to be published in December 2020 together with new 2021/23 Action Plan; next progress report to be published in Autumn 2022

Evaluate impact of actions in November 2020 – Initial impact survey conducted in October 2019; town hall meetings took place virtually to share responses and obtain further detailed feedback to inform any additional actions for the 2021/23 action plan – a second impact survey was conducted in October/November 2020 to be able to demonstrate impact as part of the 2021/23 submission due by 11th December 2020; conduct next impact survey in September 2022 providing evaluative data for 21/23 submission – submission dates to be confirmed by Science Council

APPENDIX 3 - UNIVERSITY OF CHESTER TECHNICIAN COMMITMENT ACTION PLAN: AUGUST 2024 – JULY 2027

The University of Chester is a proud signatory of the Technician Commitment, a university and research institution initiative supported by the Science Council and the Technicians Make It Happen campaign.

In backing this pledge, Chester is committed to addressing the key challenges faced by technical staff. Our commitment will establish greater visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability for our technician community across all our varied disciplines.

This action plan is a dynamic document which the Steering Group will grow and develop over the 36 months. Some of our actions will be able to be addressed with immediate effect while others will take time to develop and evaluate impact. We will seek feedback from our technical community and provide updates through our established communication channels.

In delivery this action plan, we will aim to ensure:

1. Our Technician Commitment Steering Group work to identify, address and overcome the challenges faced by our technical community. The Group will enable technicians to be visible at a strategic level and be representative of technical, academic and management/leadership colleagues who are committed to embedding the initiative.
2. We will work to establish Equality, Diversity, Inclusion within and for all of our technical community, linking with our other Institutional and School level Charters and Awards, i.e. Athena Swan action plan, Mental Health Charter.
3. We will work to establish and communicate clear technical structures linked to a career development, with an understanding of the breadth, depth and importance of technical roles, responsibilities and skills within Chester.
4. We will promote and support professional registration and representation at technical conferences where appropriate and possible as well as showcasing of technical work and achievements through university wide communication and events.
5. The sustainability of technical skills and expertise is addressed through our robust and supportive the Performance Development Review process.
6. We will continually monitor and review progress against our Action Plan, identifying where further interventions or actions may be required and communicating impact evaluation to stakeholders.

Theme: VISIBILITY: ***Ensure that all technicians within the organisation are identifiable and that the contribution of the technicians is visible within and beyond the institution***						
Item	**Rationale**	**Action**	**Outputs**	**Responsible people**	**Success measures**	**Timescales**
V1	Responses to TC Survey 2024 qu 1,2,3,4 (see appendix 5)	To develop and maintain internal and external webpages to promote visibility of Technicians across the University through events, case studies which showcase our technicians and their career journeys. (Note: the external webpages are managed by the Web Project Team, but the facilitation of profiles on the external webpages requires a Symplectic Elements profile from the Symplectic Elements Project Team.)	Webpages redesigned (with ongoing maintenance and updating)	TCSG	Increase in average response rating to responses to TC Survey 2026 qu 1-4 Technicians report that their contributions to R&KE are better recognised in TC survey 2026	September 2024
		To undertake an audit of all Technicians and Technicians included within Symplectic Elements, to ensure visibility of technical staff profiles skills and specialisms.	Symplectic Elements profiles include all Technical staff	Jill Pye (REF and KEF Manager)		August/ September 2024
		To develop a Chester Technical Hub/ network (see C4), which support opportunities for networking events, showcasing practice and informal conversations.	Development of programme of events	TCSG		From September 2024
V2	Responses to TC Survey 2024 qu 1,2,3,4 (see appendix 5) The skills, expertise and contributions technicians make need to be shared with students, academics and	Create digital signage campaign to show Technician Achievements alongside TC awards Level	Member of TCSG identified to lead on action Digital signage campaign	TCSG	Increase in average response rating to responses to TC Survey 2026	September 2025

	other non-technical professional services staff to raise awareness of the importance of their roles in relation to teaching and research		created and rolled out			
		Publicise the success of our technicians in news stories, and networks increasing engagement with content both online and in person.	Articles created and published	Each member of TCSG to liaise with Communications to create and promote		From September 2024
		Ensure that all technicians are included on subject webpages as key members of staff	Webpages amended	Each member of TCSG to ensure this is the case in their own Division.		September 24
V3	Very successful events held to date Good involvement in NW Technician network	To build on the success of previous Technician conferences with biennial conference, utilising NW Technician network for contacts and collaboration as appropriate, ensuring Technicians from across the University all have the opportunity to be involved. Target academic staff and staff (particularly those with limited understanding of Technical work) to attend	Conference planned and delivered every two years Increased attendance from academic staff and staff with limited	TCSG SET	Increased visibility of technical staff across the University. Positive feedback from events	By June 2025

			understanding of Technical work		Showcasing of good practice and networking	
V4	Carried forward from Action Plan 2021-2023	To ensure increased levels of participation from areas like Facilities and Estates to involve Technicians, through involvement in the Operational Groups for each University site, at planning stages of any projects that involve structural changes to rooms/ impact on Technicians' provision.	Member of TCSG identified for each operational group Technical staff included in project teams for major works Effective utilisation of *Our Technical Community* teams site to keep all technicians informed Standing agenda item on each TCSG meeting to feedback decisions and ensure input from group.	TCSG	Technical spaces are fit for purpose	From September 2024

V5	5.18 average rating in TC Survey 2024 *(I feel I have sufficient opportunity to engage with activities which take place in the community, school and colleges).* MITalent Recommendation R6	To create effective links with Head of Outreach and Access to ensure Technicians can support outreach and public engagement activities regarding technical careers in local schools and colleges to increase visibility of technical career opportunities to young people.	Head of Outreach and Access invited to attend meeting of TCSG to determine actions Technical careers outreach sessions established	TCSG with Head of Outreach and Access	Increase to average rating of 6.5 in TC Survey 2026	Jan 2025
V6	5.07 average rating in TC Survey 2024 *(I feel that Technicians are encouraged to contribute to/ engage with new initiatives and longer-term projects)*	Deliver a TC presentation at Heads of Division meeting every 6 months to build more effective relationships with Heads and seek opportunities for Technicians to engage with and contribute towards new initiatives and longer-term projects	Presentation developed by TCSG Identified TCSG members attend HoDs meeting to present and discuss	TCSG Deputy VC (Chair of Heads of Division meetings)	Increase to average rating of 6.5 in TC Survey 2026	Jan 2025
V7	3.96 average rating in TC Survey 2024 *(I feel the role of Technician is seen as important by more senior managers)*	To author a quarterly report from TCSG to SET on the work of the group, progress, next steps etc	Report generated	TCSG	Increase average rating to 5 in TC Survey 2026.	From January 2025

V8	MITalent Recommendation R12	Ensure technical staff sit on appropriate institution- and sector-level decision-making committees and boards to ensure these groups reflect the community they represent and to provide diversity of views and expertise.	Committee memberships reviewed to include technical representation. Opportunities to contribute to sector wide initiatives shared with technical colleagues and actively encouraged through PDPs etc.	TCSG	Significant impact in many other aspects of the action plan.	From September 2024
RECOGNITION: ***Support technicians to gain recognition through professional registration and external awards schemes***						
Item	**Rationale**	**Action**	**Outputs**	**Responsible people**	**Success measures**	**Timescales**
R1	4.71 average response rating in TC Survey 2024 *(I have the opportunity to expand my skills, knowledge and expertise in support of wider (i.e. University/ Faculty/ School/ Division/ departmental) objectives/ priorities)*	Deliver demonstrations throughout the year either face to face and/or using videos on Portal; information can be integrated into the Annual Learning Calendar managed by HR	Programme of demonstrations determined by TCSG Programme published and evaluated	TCSG and individual technicians to deliver	Increase to average rating of 6 in TC Survey 2026	From September 2024

	MI Talent Recommendation R10					
R2	Carried forward from Action Plan 2021-2023	Seek more opportunities for Awards for Technicians	Award opportunities shared on *Our Technical Community* Teams site Liaise with SU to establish Technician category for 1839 awards	All technicians	At least one technician per annuum celebrated with award	From September 2024
R3	Carried forward from Action Plan 2021-2023 Responses to TC Survey 2024 qu 1,2,3,4 (see appendix 5)	Attend each University welcome event with information about the TC to be provided to all new staff	Attendance at events Information shared with all new staff	TCSG	Increase in average response rating to responses to TC Survey 2026 qu 1-4	From September 2024
R4	3.18 average rating in TC Survey 2024 (*I am already registered as a professional with an appropriate professional body suitable for my discipline)* with 53.5% respondents stating they were not registered and 46.5% stating they did not understand how to apply.	Support a further three technicians per year to achieve professional registration Provide information sessions and mentoring on how to apply Support alternatives in subject areas where professional registration in not current practice.	Invite Jane Banks to deliver session at TC Steering Group and record session Provide mentorship from staff who have achieved professional recognition	Kathryn Leighton, HR Manager – OD/EDI TCSG	Increase to average rating of 5 in TC Survey 2026 to same qu Reduction to 30% respondents stating they are not registered in TC Survey 2026	From Jan 2025

			Engage with colleagues in these subject areas to determine what alternatives they would see value in.		Reduction to 25% stating they do not understand how to apply in TC Survey 2026	
R5	Technical contributions to research not always documented MITalent Recommendation R11	Promote use of existing fair attribution policy amongst research networks Allow technical staff to be recognised as supervisors on research projects Allow technical staff to act as PIs on research projects Further review the Technician Commitment UKRI Action Plan to see how this can further support our work.	Existing fair attribution policy promoted effectively Technical staff recognised as supervisors on research projects Technical staff operating as PIs on research projects	Dr Elizabeth Christopher, Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange	Better recognition of technical staff contributions in REF, particularly People, Culture & Environment (PCE) category	From September 2024

CAREER DEVELOPMENT: ***Enable career progression opportunities for technicians through the provision of clear, documented career pathways***						
Item	**Rationale**	**Action**	**Outputs**	**Responsible people**	**Success measures**	**Timescales**
C1	In order to support career progression, it is necessary to better understand the issues affecting the technical community	Analyse data from Performance and Development Plans (PDPs) and exit interviews	Identify common themes and areas in most urgent need of attention	Donna Allan, HRBP for OD TCSG	Greater ability to define specific goals relating to technical careers and feed into other CD actions.	From September 2024
C2	The University does not have clear, documented career pathways for Technician's. Responses to *Do you have any suggestions for actions which will impact on the visibility, recognition, career development or sustainability of Technicians over the next 3 years?* Overwhelmingly referenced the need for a career pathway framework. 4.82 average rating in TC Survey 2024 *(I have clear career goals)* 4.43 average rating in TC Survey 2024 (*I know which skills and developmental*	Implement a full Career Pathways Framework for Technicians, to include: • Audit of existing practices around regrading and promoting technical staff • Audit of current reporting lines • Review of all technical job titles with aim of creating consistent titles and grades • Engage with technical staff to get clearer understanding of actual role responsibilities and review job descriptions accordingly • Further development of Technicians Technical Skills Matrix, which recognises individual expertise/skills profile • Recognition of those who consistently exceed role requirements • Qualifications • Creation of case studies to facilitate operational clarification of roles and responsibilities of Technicians alongside academics	Project team identified Full action plan devised and approved by SET with timescales and SMART actions Action plan implemented Changes made	TCSG SET	Creation and implementation of the Framework proposal. Defining opportunities and career routes. Increase to average rating of 6 in TC Survey 2026 Considerations for recruitment, development, succession planning and	From September 2024

	areas need to be addressed to enable me to progress in my career as a Technician) MITalent Recommendation R9	• Exploration of flexibility and legitimacy of pay related reward structures for Technicians in terms of Competitiveness with respect to external company pay rates • Succession planning			retention of technical staff	
C3	Anecdotal/ qualitative evidence that technicians feel they do not receive adequate notice of requirements and therefore feel they have insufficient time to provide the quality they would like or feel stressed and pressured 5.93 average rating in TC Survey 2024 *(I have sufficient opportunity to keep my skills, knowledge and expertise current)*	Seek to support technical staff in managing the expectations of others by developing a programme of events as part of the University Learning Calendar to include a programme of soft skills, tailored specifically for technician challenges, including Lean and Assertiveness. Identify situations which are problematic and advocate for technical input earlier in decision making process e.g. technical seats on project teams or programme teams	Programme developed	Kathryn Leighton, HR Manager – OD/EDI	Increase to average response rate of 7 in TC Survey 2026	From September 2024
C4	5.93 average rating in TC Survey 2024 *(I have sufficient opportunity to keep my skills, knowledge and expertise current)* 5.07 average rating in TC Survey 2024 (*The University enables the sharing of knowledge and expertise which ensures the sustainability of technical skills across the University)*	Create a UoC Technician Hub/ Network which will meet monthly open to all Technicians to focus on proactively developing staff in their roles and in support of career progression. Network aims • updating and broadening of skills, • enable sharing of skills/knowledge/ best practice/ training/ resources • application of skills shadowing others to gain experience of different roles and skill / knowledge development. • mentoring and buddying • Exchange opportunities •	Network established Monthly meetings scheduled with topics identified and on agenda in advance Strategic approach to	Kathryn Leighton, HR Manager – OD/EDI to coordinate All TCSG to input	Increase to average response rate of 7 in TC Survey 2026. UoC well prepared for future and has skills in place ready to support	From September 2024

	MI Talent Recommendation R1 and R13	• Demonstrations/ speakers (no cost) • sharing of expertise and collaboration • form partnerships with organisations and initiatives that provide technical and vocational training (e.g. Catapult Centres in the UK and Institutes of Technology in England) Work with other HEIS to deliver technical training on a regional or discipline-specific basis and to provide network opportunities for the sharing of technical expertise. Continued engagement with NW network and development of opportunities through this network.	technical skills established Proactive technical skills strategy that builds on existing qualities and horizon scans to ensure future readiness established.	NW Technical Network	students of the future	
C5	6.43 average rating in TC Survey 2024 *(I have the opportunity to coach/ mentor other members of staff and therefore I am able to transfer my skills, knowledge and expertise to more junior members of staff or apprentices)* shows that informally there is good practice in this area which can be formalised and rolled out more broadly across the University.	Develop the Career Mentors for Technicians scheme further and ensure effective promotion of both mentoring and mentee opportunities. Link with SHaring Academic Practice Experience (SHAPE) mentoring scheme[1]. Allocate mentors for new starters to support probation process. Advantages to both the new staff members but also provides development opportunities to longer serving staff.	Scheme established and publicised	KL to coordinate All TCSG to input	Increase to average response rate of 8 in TC Survey 2026.	From Feb 2025

[1] SHAPE aims to pair experienced individuals involved in teaching or research with colleagues at an earlier career stage to provide guidance and support. Mentoring is a developmental partnership in which a Mentee is guided by a Mentor who uses their expertise, knowledge and personal experience to help the Mentee achieve their work-related goals.

C6	5.07 average rating in TC survey 2024 (*My manager facilitates meaningful discussions relating to career progression and actively supports my personal and professional development)*	Open opportunities for NW Technician network to everyone as well as collating a list of subject specific networking opportunities for use in PDPs.	List collated and shared with all Technical managers	All TCSG to input	Increase to average response rate of 7 in TC Survey 2026.	From September 2024
C7	Success of Herschell programme for member of TCSG who has undertaken it MITalent Recommendation R4	To fund one member of staff per annum to undertake the Herschel programme.	Programme completed	Rashmi Patel, Strategic Director of HR	Staff who have undertaken the programme promoted to leadership position within 3 years of attendance on the programme	From 24/25 academic year and annually thereafter
C8	Establish opportunities for technical staff to work as Visiting Lecturers (VLs) to gain experience of teaching and potentially move into lecturing roles. MITalent Recommendation R2	Continue to encourage the use of VL opportunities to support tech staff with aspirations in this area. Where already well established in some subject areas, seek to share best practice here.	Best practice shared and changes implemented	TCSG	Data captured around current activity and monitored for changes on annual basis. Report to TCSG annually	From September 2025
		Support technical staff to undertake PGCHE and similar teaching development programmes such as CERTS and Talent.	Increase in number of technical staff completing these programmes	TCSG with CAID (Centre for Academic Innovation and Development)		

		Encourage technical staff to engage with Advance HE fellowship process.	Increase in number of technical staff achieving Advance HE fellowship.	TCSG with CAID		
C9	Evidence of good practice and successful outcomes from some subject areas	Support, where appropriate, the undertaking of internal Undergraduate Postgraduate or Doctoral awards. Where skills/knowledge gaps are identified within the university support completion of same awards externally to ensure currency and future readiness of provision.	Technical staff engaged with relevant courses.	TCSG and relevant line managers.	Increase in highest qualification data for technical community. Reflected in PDP Increased contribution to academic activity	
SUSTAINABILITY: ***Ensure the future sustainability of technical skills across the organisation and that technical expertise is fully utilised***						
Item	**Rationale**	**Action**	**Outputs**	**Responsible people**	**Success measures**	**Timescales**
S1	Carried forward from Action Plan 2021-2023 MITalent Recommendation R7	To work with HRBP for OD to fully Integrate Apprenticeships into the employment lifecycle of Technicians i.e. not just at the recruitment stage Consider creating placement opportunities for T-Level placements within technical teams.	Guide to using apprenticeship effectively for Technicians created Meeting proposed with	Donna Allan, HRBP for OD	3 Technicians undertaking apprenticeships annually T-Level Placements established	From September 2025

			ITSS T-Level lead Jo Hartley-Metcalfe			
S2	6.43 average rating in TC Survey 2024 *(I have the opportunity to coach/ mentor other members of staff and therefore I am able to transfer my skills, knowledge and expertise to more junior members of staff or apprentices)* shows that informally there is good practice in this area which can be formalised and rolled out more broadly across the University.	Explore opportunities for Technicians to Mentor/Buddy other Technicians to transfer skills, knowledge and expertise to more junior member of staff or apprentices Utilise NW Technician Network for inter-University mentoring opportunities.	Scheme established and publicised	Kathryn Leighton, HR Manager – OD/EDI to coordinate All TCSG to input	Increase to average response rate of 8 in TC Survey 2026.	From September 2024
S3	Anecdotal feedback from members of the TCSG. Widely expressed concern in sector wide discussions. MITalent Recommendation R5	To review the way in which research budgets are costed to ensure the involvement of Technicians at the relevant time and ensure their time and equipment are resourced appropriately. To incorporate Technician Commitment themes into full staff survey during 2024/25 and review responses for technical colleagues. To look at efficiencies and cross School/Faculty resources equipment sharing.	Guidance developed Technicians involved at appropriate time	TCSG with Paul Bissell (PVC Research)	Question to assess success of action built into TC Survey 2026.	From September 2024

S4	MITalent recommendation R3	To collect, report and analyse data on our technical workforce on an annual basis with specific consideration of those roles at the interface with academic roles.	Data presented to TCSG on annual basis and actions developed as a result	Jules Crane. EDI Officer with TCSG	Expansion of data to include numbers of technical staff delivering teaching and learning activities, as well as those delivering research.	From September 2024
S5	MITalent recommendation R4 and data in appendix 4. Technician Ethnicity balance for UoC (appendix 4) shows that no technical staff disclose their ethnicity as Black, Asian or other Minority Ethnic group.	To apply a process of positive action to all vacancies for technical roles, following UoC Positive Action guide	Positive action statements included in all technical vacancy adverts and other positive action initiatives applied (targeted advertising etc as appropriate)	Human Resources team All recruiting managers	Increase to 5% of technical staff disclosing their ethnicity as Black, Asian or other Minority Ethnic group by September 2026	From September 2024
S6	MITalent Recommendation R8	To ensure inclusion of technical expertise within end-to-end recruitment and selection (R&S) processes when hiring for technical roles. This should include utilising technical expertise when compiling role profiles, advice on where to advertise and technical input or representation on recruitment panels.	To invite HR Business Partners to discuss this action with the TCSG and determine changes to R&S	Human Resources Team All recruiting managers	Question to assess success of action built into TC Survey 2026.	From September 2024

			processes for technical roles			
S7	MITalent Recommendation R10	To link more effectively with the work of the Research Excellence in HR Steering Group to share best practice and ensure that initiatives and actions undertaken through this area of work apply to both Technicians and Researchersas appropriate.	To invite Research Innovation Office staff to TCSG to discuss this action plan and determine resulting actions (to be built into this action plan)	TCSG Dr Elizabeth Christopher, Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange	Question to assess success of action built into TC Survey 2026.	From April 2025

Note: *Key to the achievement of this action plan will be:*

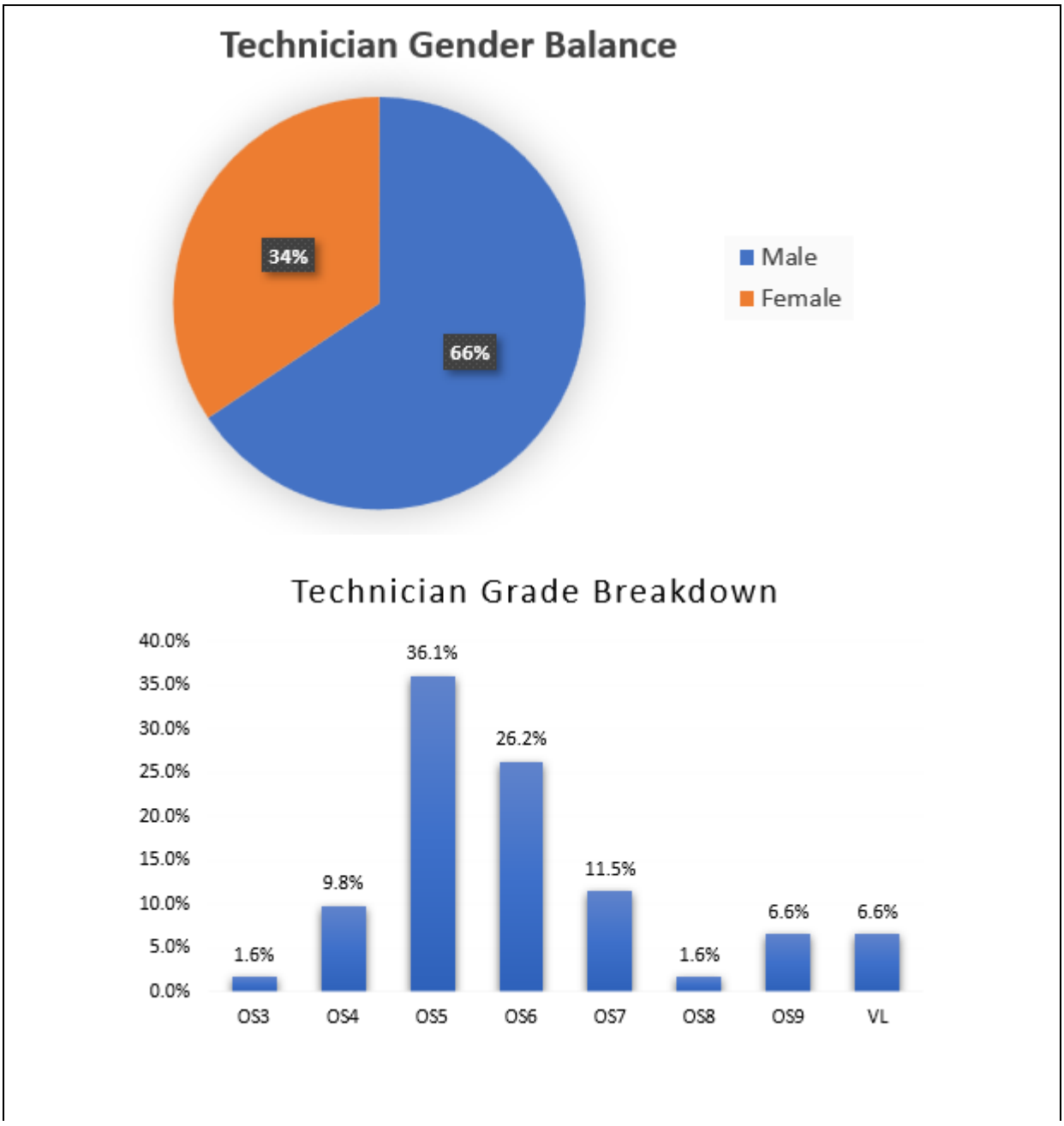
1, Monthly meetings of the TCSG

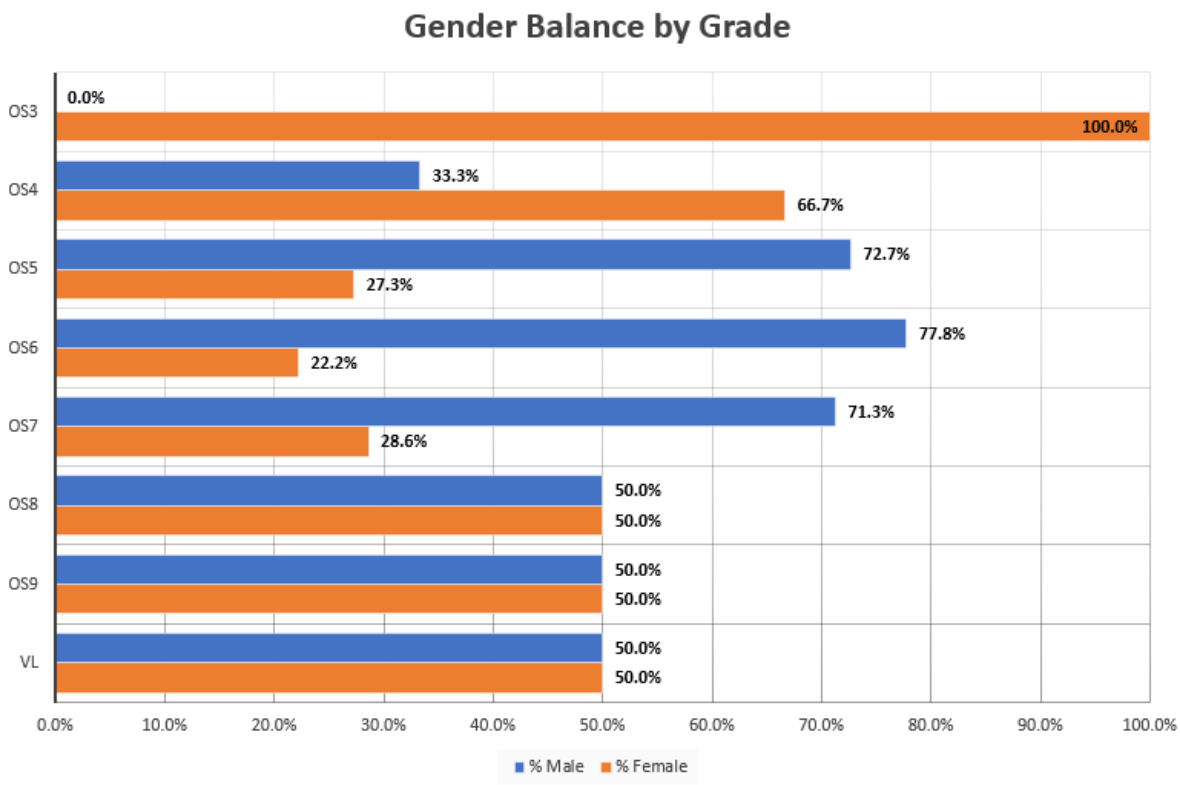
2, Continued and purposeful Senior sponsorship of the Technician Commitment

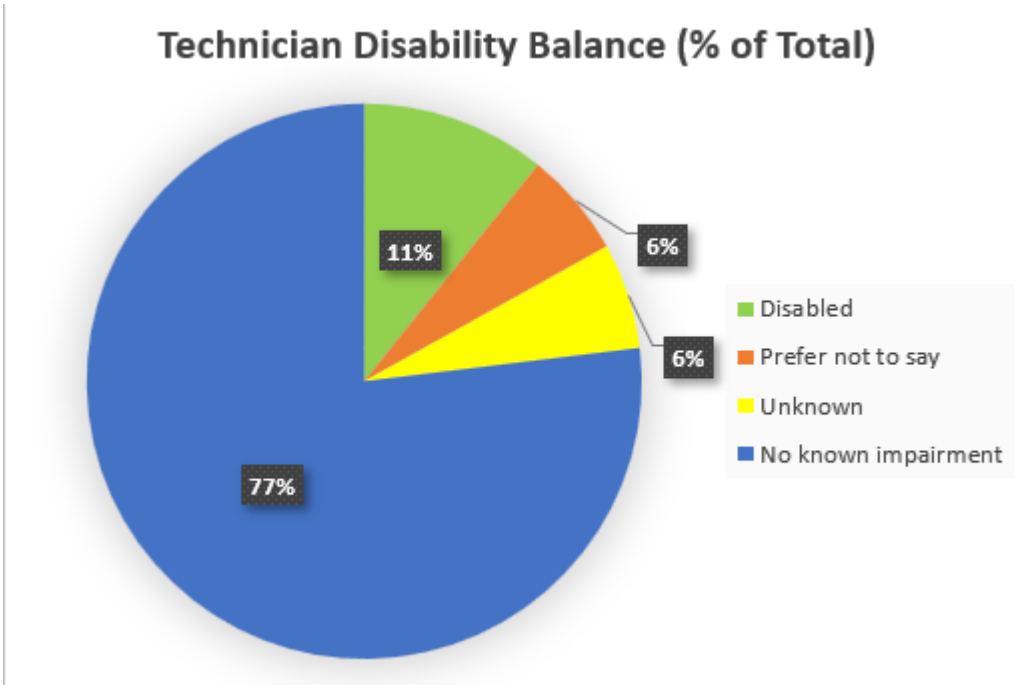
3, Identification of subgroups of the TCSG to take forward key areas of the action plan with identified stakeholder engagement from across Faculty and professional services directorates

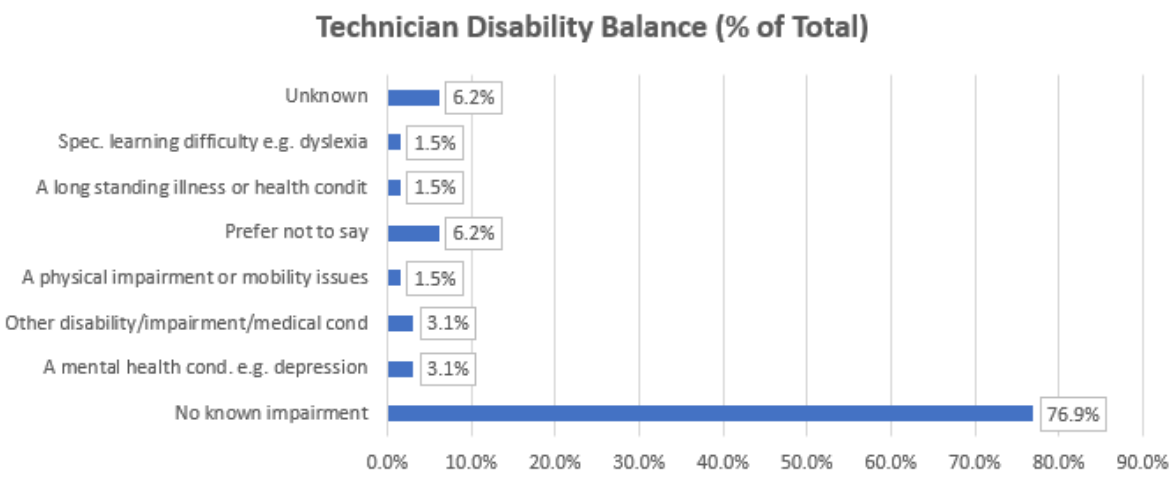
4, MITalent Recommendation R15 - Technical staff should engage positively with current and future opportunities that are available to them.

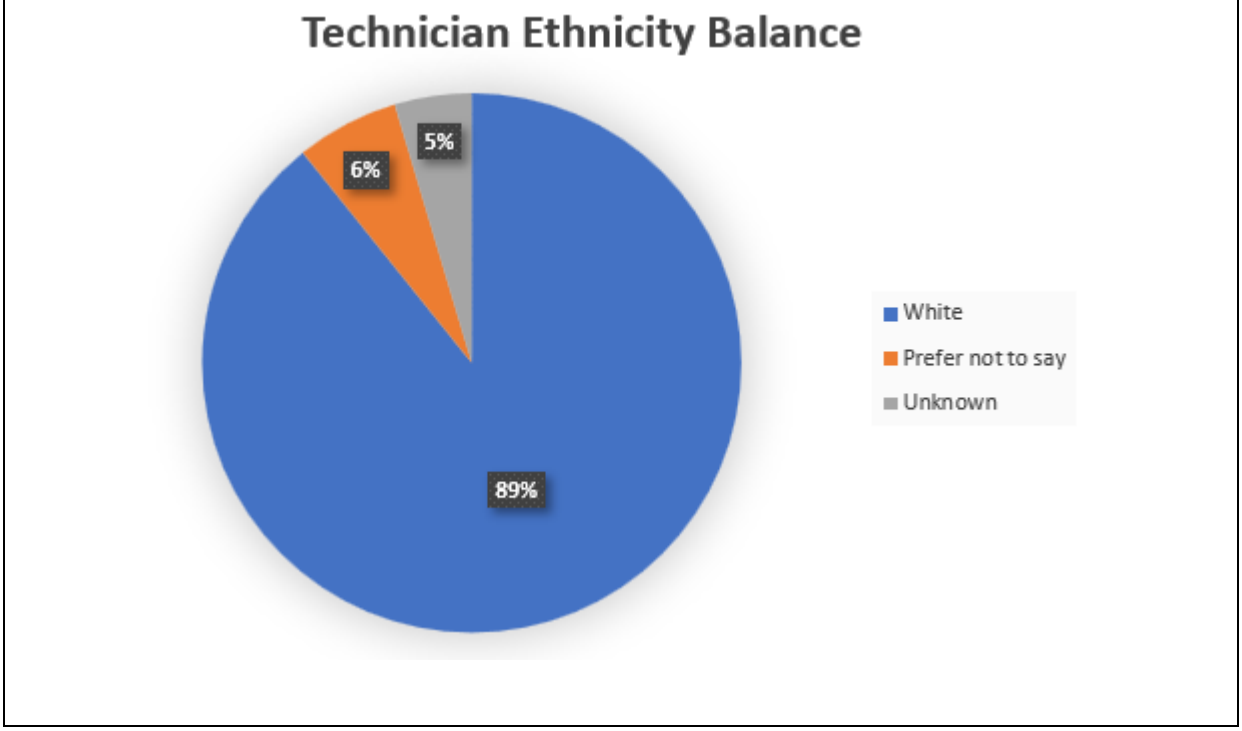
Appendix 4: University of Chester Technical Staff Data




Gender Balance by Grade
OS3
0.0%
100.0%
OS4
33.3%
66.7%
OS5
72.7%
27.3%
OS6
77.8%
22.2%
OS7
71.3%
28.6%
OS8
50.0%
50.0%
OS9
50.0%
50.0%
VL
50.0%
50.0%
0.0% 10.0% 20.0% 30.0% 40.0% 50.0% 60.0% 70.0% 80.0% 90.0% 100.0%
% Male
% Female


Technician Disability Balance (% of Total)
11%
6%
6%
77%
Disabled
Prefer not to say
Unknown
No known impairment


Technician Disability Balance (% of Total)
Unknown
6.2%
Spec. learning difficulty e.g. dyslexia
1.5%
A long standing illness or health condit
1.5%
Prefer not to say
6.2%
A physical impairment or mobility issues
1.5%
Other disability/impairment/medical cond
3.1%
A mental health cond. e.g. depression
3.1%
No known impairment
76.9%
0.0% 10.0% 20.0% 30.0% 40.0% 50.0% 60.0% 70.0% 80.0% 90.0%


Technician Ethnicity Balance
5%
6%
89%
White
Prefer not to say
Unknown

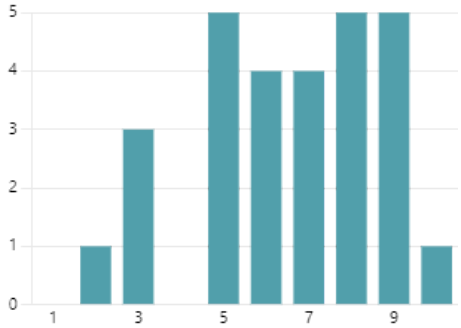
Appendix 5

Technician Commitment Survey: June 2024

28 Responses | 120:00 Average time to complete | Active Status

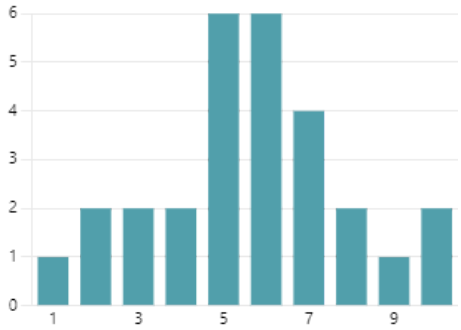
1. 1.1. I feel that the role of Technician at the University of Chester is seen as important by students:

6.54
Average Rating



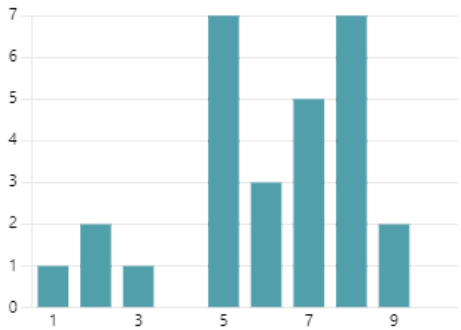
2. 1.2. I feel that the role of Technician at the University of Chester is seen as important by academics:

5.64
Average Rating



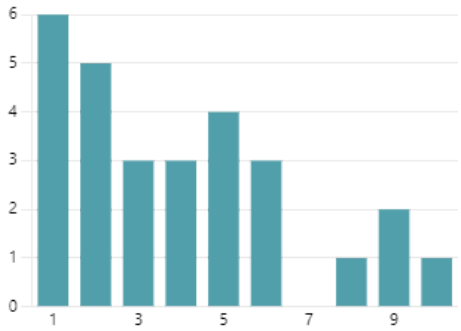
3. 1.3. I feel that the role of Technician at the University of Chester is seen as important by other Professional Services staff:

6.07
Average Rating



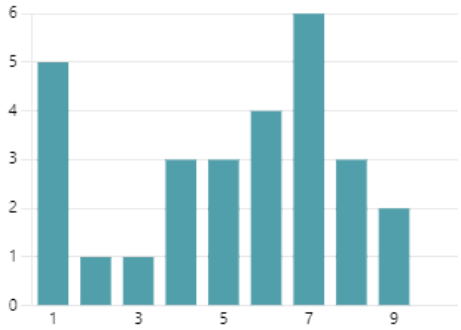
4. 1.4. I feel that the role of Technician at the University of Chester is seen as important by more senior managers, i.e. more senior than immediate line manager:

3.96
Average Rating



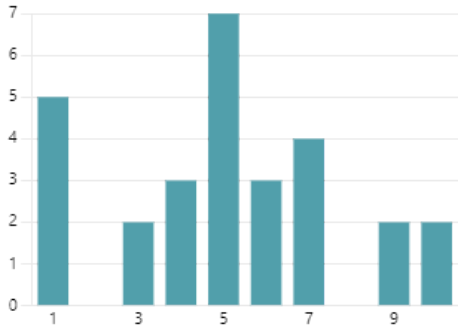
5. 1.5. I feel I have sufficient opportunity to engage with activities that take place in the community, schools and colleges:

5.18
Average Rating



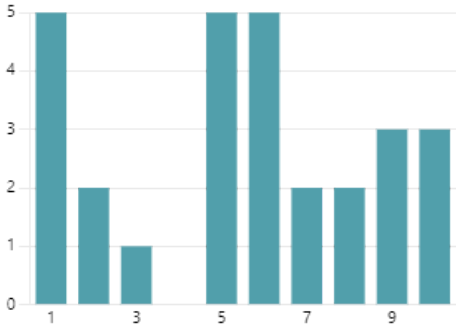
6. 1.6. I feel that Technicians are encouraged to contribute to/ engage with new initiatives and longer term projects:

5.07
Average Rating



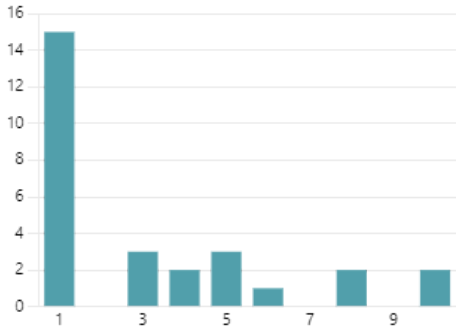
7. 2.1. I understand the benefits of professional registration.

5.50
Average Rating



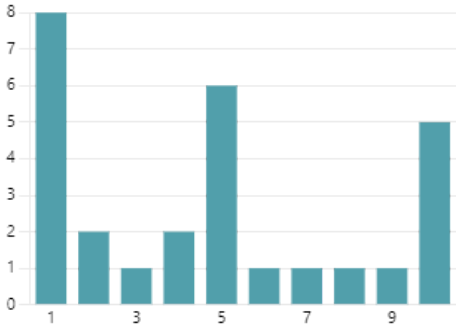
8. 2.2. I am already registered as a professional with an appropriate professional body suitable for my discipline:

3.18
Average Rating



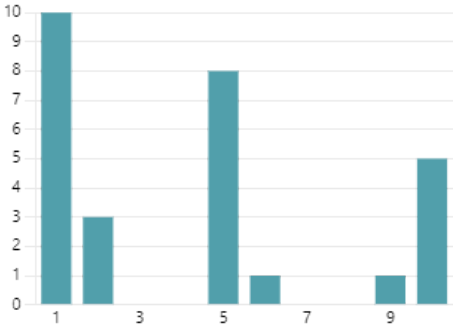
9. 2.3. I understand how to apply for professional registration:

4.75
Average Rating



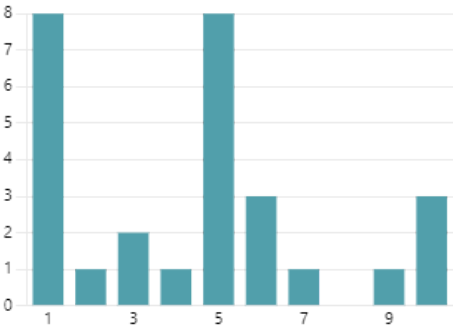
10. 2.4. I know which professional body is best for me:

4.32
Average Rating



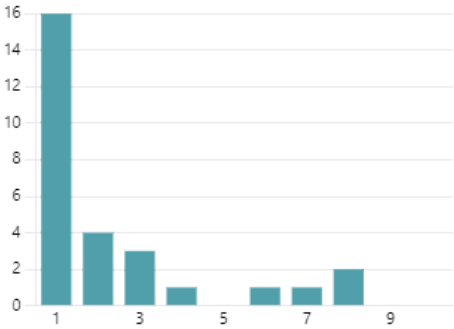
11. 2.5. I feel the University of Chester is supportive with respect to professional registration

4.43
Average Rating



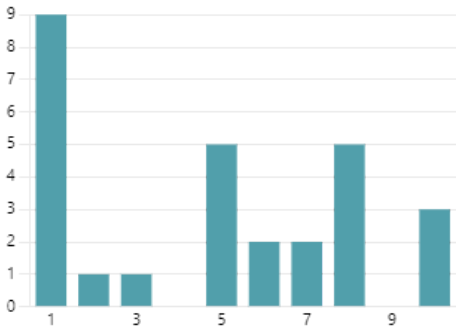
12. 3.1. The University of Chester has clear, documented career pathways for Technicians

2.36
Average Rating



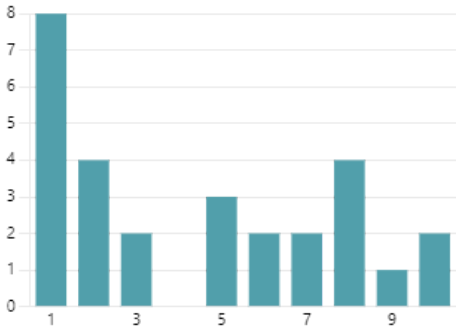
13. 3.2. I have clear career goals:

4.82
Average Rating



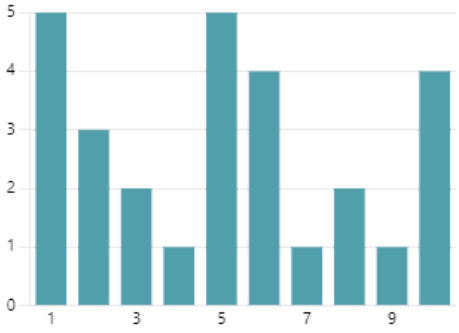
14. 3.3. I know which skills and developmental areas need to be addressed to enable me to progress in my career as a Technician:

4.43
Average Rating



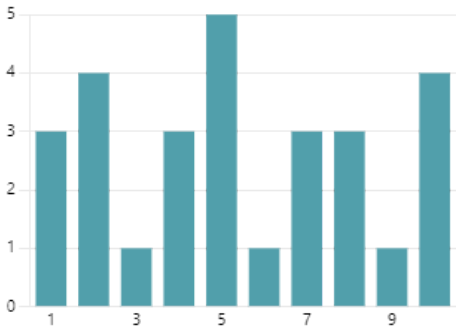
15. 3.4. My manager facilitates meaningful discussions relating to career progression and actively supports my personal and professional development:

5.07
Average Rating



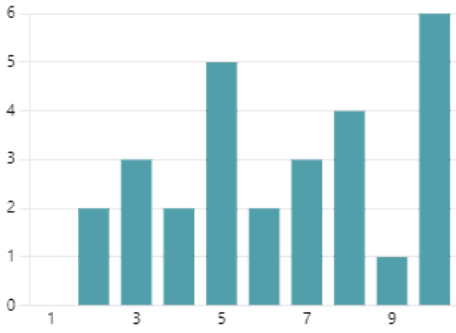
16. 3.5. I have the means of recording all CPD undertaken to monitor my career development and progress:

5.39
Average Rating



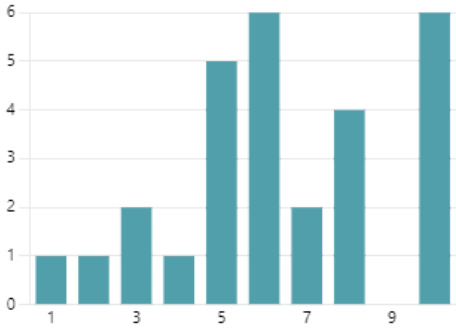
17. 4.1. My manager enables me to fully utilise my skills, knowledge and expertise:

6.43
Average Rating



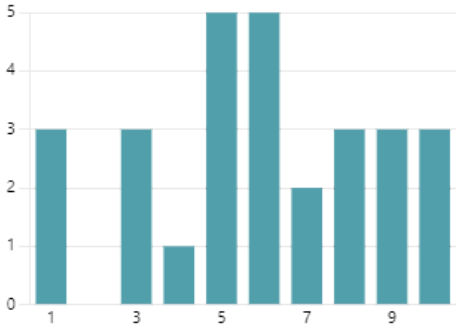
18. 4.2. I have the opportunity to coach/ mentor other members of staff and therefore I am able to transfer my skills, knowledge and expertise to more junior members of staff or apprentices:

6.43
Average Rating



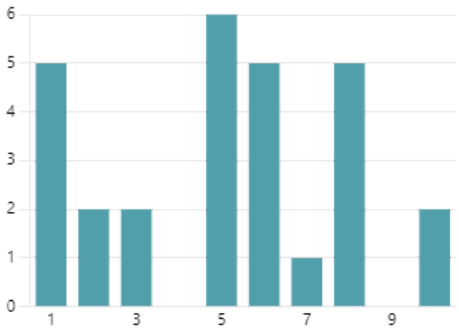
19. 4.3. I have sufficient opportunity to keep my skills, knowledge and expertise current:

5.93
Average Rating



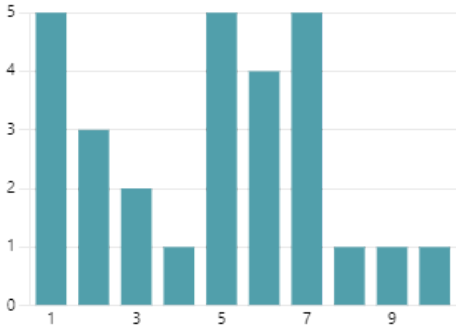
20. 4.4. The University enables the sharing of knowledge and expertise which ensures the sustainability of technical skills across the University:

5.07
Average Rating



21. 4.5. I have the opportunity to expand my skills, knowledge and expertise in support of wider (i.e. University/ Faculty/ School/ Division/ departmental) objectives/ priorities:

4.71
Average Rating



22. Do you have any evidence relating to changes to the visibility, recognition, career development or sustainability of Technicians over the last 3 years? If so, detail below:

13
Responses

Latest Responses

5 respondents (**38**%) answered **Technicians** for this question.

23. Do you have any suggestions for actions which will impact on the visibility, recognition, career development or sustainability of Technicians over the next 3 years? If so, detail below:

11
Responses

Latest Responses

6 respondents (**55**%) answered **technicians** for this question.