



# Technician Commitment

2022-2025: 36 month Action Plan

# University of Southampton Technician Commitment - 36 month Action plan

(commencing January 2022)

## Engagement and Understanding

Actions related to the function and governance of the Technician Commitment Implementation Group and monitoring impact.

Ref#	Theme	Action	Measure	Action owner	Start	Finish
1.1	Keep track of the impact of Technician Commitment and progress	Annual survey for TAE staff - "Voice of the Technician" to capture impact, qualitative feedback (start of each new academic year) including feedback on each of the Technician Commitment themes and supported with open feedback sessions.	% take-up of survey improvement year on year 2022 target >30% 2024 target > 40%	TCIG	Oct 2021	Annual
1.2		Annual data analysis snapshot of technical community to capture; demographics and quantitative information around equality and diversity, recruitment and career progression, and identify any disparities/differences between faculties and locations.	Annual Databook review and workshop, with recommendations collected and fed into university committees as appropriate	TCIG ED&I	Jan 2022	Annual
1.3		University staff Survey - engagement by TCIG with outputs from staff/pulse surveys, relating specifically to TAE job family; to interpret and support activity relating to key themes and issues raised and feedback to the tech community	% take-up of TAE staff with the UoS survey improves year on year	TCIG HR	University led	Annual
2.1	Review governance structures and strategic links to support delivery of action plan	Annual review of Terms of Reference for Technician Commitment Implementation Group (TCIG) and Working Groups; including review of membership to ensure appropriate representation and confidentiality statements returned.	Version control on ToR and membership lists	TCIG	Jan 2022	Annual
2.2		Resource provided by TC role holders reviewed; Faculty Technical Leads (FEPS/FELS/FMED/FAH) (0.2FTE) and Event Coordinator (0.2FTE)	Roles reviewed at appropriate end of term of office	TCIG	Jan 2022	Annual
2.3		Project Management provided by Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team to support ongoing links between TCIG and other Charter Marks. Ensure technical staff are represented in each of the other Charter Marks; Athena Swan, Race Equality Charter, Concordat, Disability Confident and Widening Participation.	Project management support is provided TAE representation at each Charter Mark Committee	TCIG	Jan 2022	Annual

## Career Development

Our Technician feedback exercises in September 2021 highlighted a need to focus more on Career Development and particularly the career pathways for our technical staff. This breaks down into several key actions, including a comprehensive benchmarking exercise and review of our current organisational structure, and the building of a business case to support the introduction of a Level 6 Technical and Experimental role. In addition, we want to improve the transparency of our current pathway and assist staff in their progression through raising awareness and signposting of e.g. mentoring initiatives, training programmes, and induction and appraisal processes.

Ref#	Theme	Action	Measure	Action owner	Start	Finish
3.1	Ensure new technical staff are welcomed and brought up to speed with our commitment	Recruitment - Promote UoS as a signatory of the TC in recruitment campaigns. Develop standard text for job advertisements (in the body of text) and ensure Technician Commitment logo is visible	TC visible on all advertisements for TAE staff	CDWG Recruiting Managers	Feb 2022	Mar 2022
3.2		Induction - Welcome communications from Technicians@soton to new starters, signposting useful info specifically related to TAE staff. New starters identified monthly with support from HR Leadership & Management.	Emails sent from technicians@soton.ac.uk to a monthly circulation list provided by HR	VWG	Mar 2022	monthly
3.3		Induction for new starters - University level ensure staff engage with induction programme offered via "Staffbook". Faculty Induction - develop local induction (Faculty/School/Department), track and monitor completion (also linked to Athena Swan action).  Student Introduction - Develop custom and practice of technical staff being introduced to students at the start of all programmes/courses. Consider unique identifier for technical staff working in laboratories, for example coloured collars/lab coats.	October TC survey to contain a section for new starters from the previous year to receive qualitative feedback and scores. First data to be collected in 2022, with Year on Year increases in positive feedback.  Lab coat consultation with Technician community and gauge take-up ahead of any implementation	VWG	Oct 2022	Dec 2024
4.1	Enabling clear career progression, through the provision of regular appraisal conversations with line managers	Support HR in delivering appraisals for all staff: 2021/22 preparations to align Level 1-3 TAE staff appraisals with new system and timeline. 2022/23 - Level 1-3 staff recording first objectives in appraisal system completion rate of >60%. 2023/24 - Level 1-3 first year appraisal completion rate >70%. L4-5 >90% 2024/25 completion rate of >90% for all TAE staff Continue to monitor PPDR reviews and how they are used.	Track and monitor engagement of appraisal and PPDR. > 90% completion rate for all TAE staff by 2024/25	CDWG HR	Nov 2022	Dec 2024
4.2		Engage and support Line Managers of Technical staff in the appraisal process and promote a better understanding of the technical pathway and career progression	Manager briefings, communications and engagement plan	CDWG	Dec 2022	Dec 2024

Ref#	Theme	Action	Measure	Action owner	Start	Finish
4.3	Improve guidance and awareness around job evaluations	Increase awareness and transparency around job evaluation process; Develop an e-learning course on job evaluation; Invite Technical leads/Line Manager to attend job evaluation panels as an observer.	All line managers completed the e-learning course. A decrease in % of staff responding negatively in the survey questions around Career Devt (from 34% to <20%)	CDWG / HR	Jan 2022	Dec 2024
5.1	Improve guidance and awareness around TAE career progression	Update generic job description library for TAE roles from Level 1b to Level 5. create library of pre-evaluated roles for reference.	Job Description library complete and easily accessible to staff	HR	Feb 2022	Dec 2024
5.2		Guidance to support career development and movement between different career pathways at Southampton; For technicians this will include greater clarity on how a career at Southampton may move between the Technical and Experimental (TAE) pathway, the Education, Research and Enterprise (ERE) pathway and the Management, Specialist and Administrative (MSA) pathway.	A decrease in % of staff responding negatively in the survey questions around Career Devt (from 34% to <20%) and an increase in # of Technical staff visibly moving pathways	HR	Jul 2022	Jul 2023
5.3	Review / develop the TAE career pathway	Career progression - Consider organisational structure and develop a business case to support the introduction of a Level 6 Technical and Experimental role.	A suitable level 6 TAE role is appointed at the University	HR	Jul 2022	Jul 2024
5.4	Improve job security and talent retention by reducing the % of TAE staff on Fixed Term Contracts (FTC) and transferring them onto Open Ended Contracts (OEC)	<p>Work in collaboration with the Researcher Concordat working group and Athena Swan teams to build an evidence base and comprehensive understanding of current practice to support next steps.</p> <p>Support with policy reviews and governance updates related to FTC to OEC conversion processes</p> <p>Review all TAE staff currently employed on FTCs with &gt;4 years' service, with a view to offering those eligible an OEC.</p> <p>We aspire to extend this provision further, contingent on wider university initiatives and policy being implemented. (note wider target deadlines are in 2026)</p>	<p>Any staff with &gt;4 yrs service to have been offered an OEC.</p> <p>A reduction in % of TAE FTC staff is required to successfully complete this action.</p>	<p>TCIG</p> <p>HR</p>	Mar 2022	Dec 2024

Ref#	Theme	Action	Measure	Action owner	Start	Finish
6.1	Supporting Continuing Professional Development through mentoring	Develop, support and encourage mentoring for technical staff; identify those willing to mentor technical staff and those seeking a mentor; at all levels and across the university	A database of technical mentors and mentees. success tracked and monitored through responses to "Voice of Technician Survey".	VWG	Jan 2022	Dec 2022
6.2		Work together with the wider university initiatives to ensure that mentoring opportunities for TAE staff are available, visible and promoted by line managers/colleagues.	Technical mentoring accessible via the Technician's Hub. Technical Mentoring resources are signposted from the university mentoring guidance pages. Technical mentoring included in 2 or more good practice examples on the university page.	VWG	Jul 2022	Jul 2024
7.1	Ensuring gaps in technical skills are clearly recorded	Southampton Skills survey – leverage our NTDC partnership to conduct a skills survey	survey launched. Strong engagement >80% per faculty; data analysis complete, new actions created for year 3 and beyond	Skills Audit Team	Dec 2021	Jan 2022
7.2	Promote available training and increase awareness	Review our provision of training for technical staff following the outcome of the Southampton skills survey; technical training, soft skills training, HEaTED, MSLC, leadership and management training.  Increase awareness of what is already available and increase visibility of training on the Technician Hub	Year on year increases in % of TAE staff attending training courses	Skills Audit Team	Mar 2022	Dec 2023
7.3		Raise awareness of internal training courses; Appraisal, PPDR, Maximising Contribution, Managing Underperformance, effective communications, LMD programme, mental health awareness training.	Year on year increases in % of TAE staff attending training courses	Skills Audit Team	Mar 2022	Dec 2023
7.4	Reduce barriers to entry for training courses	improve access to training (by faculty) - clear funding routes and guidance on how to join up for courses.	Year on year increases in % of TAE staff attending training courses	CDWG	Jun 2022	Jul 2023
7.5	Redeployment opportunities to improve retention of expertise	Positively promote recently strengthened redeployment policy and associated guidance, with the aim of improving recruiting managers' perceptions of appointing redeployees.	Increase in # of staff successfully redeploying at the end of FTC	CDWG	Jan 2022	Dec 2024

## Sustainability

Feedback from our technician community revealed a lack of visibility and/or progress in terms of the sustainability actions. Focus for 2022-2025 will be around having a greater impact on apprenticeship schemes and placements, through development of a business case for amending the current apprenticeship policies and generating faculty-specific targets for increased numbers of active apprenticeships.

Ref#	Theme	Action	Measure	Action owner	Start	Finish
8.1	Enhancing the apprenticeship process and guidelines	To support the recruitment process; map University grades with apprenticeship levels, National Qualification Framework (NQF) levels and Standard Occupation Codes (SOC) and update career pathways guidance accordingly. Ensure all apprenticeship Job Descriptions are located centrally and available to hiring managers.	Improved recruitment experience for hiring managers. Guidelines which adapt to changes in the sector; allowing for better leverage of the apprenticeship levy and incentive payments.  Reduction in time taken to recruit apprentice, recruitment campaigns aligned with HE timeframes to attract suitable applicants/students into work	CDWG	Jan 2022	Oct 2022
8.2		Update e-recruit system to support current practice; Hiring managers able to raise OSRF at start of process, advertisement on jobs@soton website with links to training provider (for selection process); ensure UoS compliance (UoS recruitment policy, data protection, disability confident etc.); ability to create apprenticeship contract from e-recruit.		HR	Oct 2021	Feb 2022
8.3	Ensuring apprenticeship policy is reflective of current practice and supports CPD for staff	Develop a business case for consideration at University level to amend/change the current apprenticeship policy. Engage with key stakeholders and users of the policy to better understand the challenges and opportunities presented by apprenticeships and clarify the additional resources required to support this work. Consider the impact of the policy for existing staff and include proposals to support the continuing professional development of staff in this review.	-A positive decision to review and update the apprenticeship policy which supports sustainability of technical skills through recruitment and continuing professional development. -Increased knowledge amongst hiring managers and HR colleagues - no single point of failure in the process -Improve morale and opportunities for staff development, particularly for those at lower grades (Levels 1-3 = 55% of TAE staff)	SWG	Jun 2022	Sep 2024
8.4	Sustainability of technical skills for the future (28% of TAE staff are over 50 years, compared to 24% under 30 years; average age 41.7 years)	Faculties (FEPS, FELS, Medicine) to develop annual target for new apprenticeship starters (Gov public sector target 2.3% 2021-2022, although Universities exempt). leverage apprenticeship levy for CPD of current staff	To be financially sustainable should include both apprenticeships from recruitment and CPD. Sustainability working group to track, monitor and analyse impact of apprenticeships at Southampton	Deans SWG	Feb 2022	Jul 2022

Ref#	Theme	Action	Measure	Action owner	Start	Finish
8.5	Engage with National Apprenticeship Scheme, Higher Education and allied partners in apprenticeships for sustainable skills	Engagement with trailblazer schemes and development of apprenticeship standards.	Improved visibility of UoS technical staff externally and at a national level.	SWG	Feb 2022	Dec 2024
9.1	Support internal secondments and/or external placement schemes and increase opportunities for CPD	Increase number of secondment opportunities available to all technical community; greater transparency when funding is available to backfill long term absence (ill-health/maternity) or when short-term assignments are availed new responsibilities become available	Increase number of technicians able to engage in short-medium term secondments across faculties	SWG	Mar 2022	Oct 2022
9.2		Develop guidance to support externally funded placements, including long term review of career break policy. Build on uptake of schemes akin to the "Changemaker programme" and utilise schemes such as <a href="https://careers.smartrecruiters.com/CERN/tte">https://careers.smartrecruiters.com/CERN/tte</a> .	increase number of technicians able to engage with external placements	SWG HR	Jun 2022	Dec 2024

## Visibility

Following the Technician's Voice survey, 67% of respondents agreed that Southampton had improved TAE staff visibility in the last two years. Respondents who were aware of the Technician Hub internal SharePoint gave higher scores to all themes, demonstrating a positive impact, however 31% of technical staff were still not aware of the hub, demonstrating that further promotion and enhancement of the hub could have a strong positive impact on improving the experience of our staff. Actions for 2022-2025 will further enhance engagement with the hub, in addition to delivering a technician conference on campus, enhancing our external website, and continuing our work to promote and celebrate award nominations.

Ref#	Theme	Action	Measure	Action owner	Start	Finish
10.1	Raise the Visibility and Recognition of Technicians and their work across the University	Deliver Manager Briefing documents on how to best recognise the contribution of technicians and improve their visibility, and how to enhance career development and sustainability for the technical community.	Increased nomination numbers for internal and external awards, and improved engagement with appraisal/PPDR process. Monitor on annual basis	VWG	Oct-21	Annual
10.2		Plan and run an annual technician's conference, host a "poster and exhibit" session and invite wider University and students to browse	conference event + recorded attendance figures. Monitor on annual basis	VWG	Mar-22	Annual
10.3		Staff a stall at various annual events (freshers fair, Science and Technology week)	Visibility at University events. Monitor on annual basis	VWG	Oct-22	Annual
11.1	Raise the Visibility of Technicians and their work across the University through use of an internal website / Technicians Hub	Increase internal traffic to the Technician's Hub - maintain and improve content, including information about Technician's Commitment, partnership activities (NTDC), training and Development, events, technician stories - who we are and what we do; SUSSED articles, Staff Matters	Increased traffic to internal site, use google analytics to monitor site usage  Annual review of data	VWG	Jun-22	Annual
11.2		Run workshops and a campaign to encourage technicians to complete a staff profile, (including link to technician commitment and logo, and updated guidance)	Increased numbers of technicians with staff profiles from ~19% to >33% in year 1. ongoing work to encourage new staff to set up profiles and existing staff to maintain and update profile.	VWG	Mar-22	Annual
11.3		Develop and update internal website to further showcase technicians within the University.	Use Google analytics to monitor site usage and which pages are visited the longest. Aim for 25 unique visits per month, raising to 100 by the end of the action plan due to campaign to raise awareness.	VWG	Oct-22	Annual



Ref#	Theme	Action	Measure	Action owner	Start	Finish
12.1	Raise the Visibility of Technicians and their work across the University and beyond	Develop and update external website to further showcase technicians and their work to the wider community.	Increased traffic to external site	VWG	Feb-22	Annual
12.2		Increase external visibility of technicians at Southampton through social media; e.g. LinkedIn, Twitter.	increased visibility of technicians by individuals and internal/ext. comms	VWG	Jan-22	Annual
12.3		Begin contacting local/South Coast universities to start developing a technical network, improving peer to peer visibility of technicians. Continue to support the South-East Technician Forum.	Increase in numbers of universities sending representatives to network events, development of a branded network. Potential successful funding bids and HEaTED networking day.	VWG	Jul-22	Jan-25
13.1	Raise the Visibility of Technicians and their work across the University through awards and public recognition	Utilise the Technician Hub and comms channels for encouraging external awards and honours nominations; by way of examples; Honorary degrees, Royal Honors System (MBE); British Empire Medal; WISE - new category for technical women; Times Higher Education (THE) Awards - Outstanding technician of the year award; UK Higher Education Technician Summit (HETS Award); Papin prizes (MI Talent), HE Bioscience Technician of the Year, IOP Technician Award, Higher Education Teaching Excellence Award etc.	Ensure that we consistently recognise our staff and track and monitor # of nominations and awards and identify potential nominees in advance of nomination windows.  celebrate successes of technical staff	VWG	Oct -21	Jan-25
13.2		Utilise Technician Hub and comms channels for encouraging internal awards; by way of examples and technician stories; UoS technician of the year award; VC awards; Deans awards; staff achievement awards; technical successes	increase # of nominations, increase number of articles published about technical staff on SUSSED, Staff Matters, Technician Hub. Consider and support internal award-winners with nominations for external awards.	VWG	Jan-22	Jan-25
13.3		Develop new "UoS Technician of the year award" and recognise all technical staff who have received an award at annual event	staff engaged in nomination process for technician award and annual event	VWG	Mar-22	Annual

## Recognition

A significant success for the recognition group was achieving the presence of a technical representative on the senate. Focus for the next action plan will be around improving representation across the wider forums and committees and promoting professional registration.

Ref#	Theme	Action	Measure	Action owner	Start	Finish
14.1	Technical roles support the University strategic plans for Education, Research, Enterprise.	(Research) Fair Attribution Policy and Guidance developed and published on Technician Hub to support the recognition of contributions made to research by technical staff.	6-monthly report from <a href="#">PURE</a> (publications repository) - Increase number of technicians included in publications	RWG	Jan-21	6-monthly
14.2		(Education) - Promote the Professional Recognition of Educator Practice (PREP) framework for teaching laboratory roles and those who contribute to the teaching agenda, through workshops, technician stories, appraisal process, technician hub.	Increase number of HEA Fellowships amongst technicians	RWG	Oct-2021	Annual
14.3		(University wide) - Ensure technical staff are represented at appropriate forums; Athena Swan, Concordat, Race Equality Charter, Staff Engagement Champions and appropriate faculty forums, e.g. Health & Safety committee.	Technical representation on other University Charters and Committees (see also action 2.3)	RWG	Jan-2022	Dec-2022
15.1	To recognise the technical skills of staff through professional registration	Faculty funding to be made available, through annual business planning round, for technical staff to pursue professional registration. Development need identified and time resource, required to be agreed by line manager.	Training budget for professional development included in faculty business plan	RWG/ Deans	Apr-2022	Annual
15.2		Host an annual event on professional registration with Science Council, Engineering Council, and Creative Industries Council, org. writing workshop and/or mentoring event	Attendance at event and ongoing increase in the number of technical staff pursuing professional registration	RWG	Oct-2021	Annual
15.3		Participation in Employer Champion Programme (Science Council)	Establish a group who will organise regular workshops supporting professional registration and mentoring (see action 6); increase the number of assessors and staff actively pursuing professional registration		Mar-2022	Annual
15.4		Identify, track and monitor those pursuing and having achieved professional registration; celebrate and recognise these achievements, make them visible on staff profiles (see also action 11.2).	Increase in the number of technical staff pursuing professional registration; share success stories; share best practice; encourage those registered to become mentors for others.		Nov-2021	Annual

Note: for tasks that repeat (e.g. annually), the deadline for completion is the “start date”, after which actions will be reviewed/renewed at the stated frequency.