Nottingham Trent University

Technician Commitment Ambitions and 36-Month Action Plan

Stage 2 Self-assessment December 2020
Updated: 13 January 2023 by Cat Sanderson

In September 2017 Nottingham Trent University (NTU) became 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, NTU has 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.

NTU's Technician Commitment ambitions and 36-month action plan

Under the Director of HR as the Institutional Lead, the Technician Commitment Steering Group has drafted NTU's updated action plan for our next 36 months as a signatory of the Technician Commitment and submitted our self-assessment for second stage peer review. The self-assessment and action plan have been signed by Professor Edward Peck, NTU Vice Chancellor & Chief Executive.

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

Aims

1.   Our Technician Commitment Steering Group will 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 and Respect** within and for all of our technical community, linking with our Institutional and School level Athena Swan and REC action plans.
3.   **Visibility**: We will work to establish and communicate a clear technical structure linked to a comprehensive career development pathway. A thorough understanding of the breadth, depth and importance of technical roles, responsibilities and skills within NTU will be embedded. Showcasing of technical work and achievements will be promoted via institution wide communication and events.
4.   **Recognition**: We will promote and support professional registration. Internal and external technical award opportunities for nomination will be promoted across NTU with university representation at technical conferences where appropriate and possible.
5.   **Communication**: Our Technician Commitment webpage will be up to date and signpost current and potential staff to sources of information related to NTU's progress and the Commitment itself. A comprehensive resource focussed on curating information and guidance to support our technical community will be established and maintained.
6.   We will develop a clear **career pathway** for the career development of our technical staff. Links to training and development opportunities will be visible through our curated technical resource.

7. **Sustainability of technical skills and expertise** will be addressed through our robust and supportive appraisal process, exploring placement and secondment opportunities and NTU's Professional Services Mentoring Scheme.

8. **Monitoring & Evaluation**: We will continually monitor and review progress against our Aims and Ambitions, identifying where further interventions or actions may be required and communicating impact evaluation to stakeholders.

36-Month Action Plan

Outstanding	In Progress	Complete

Action	TC Theme	Success Criteria	Timescale/ deadlines	Progress	Responsible person (s)	Comments
Refresh and re-submit updated Technician Commitment self-assessment and action plan	Signatory requirement	Self-assessment signed by VC and submitted by 11th Dec 2020 deadline. Feedback obtained from January peer review and reported back to Steering Group	Self-assessment submitted by **11th December 2020**. Peer review feedback to Steering Group **February 2021**	31/3/21 – Peer Review feedback on self-assessment received.	Steering Group agreement of self-assessment (Chair supported by HR to draft and submit)	**16/10/20** - Steering Group to discuss in meeting 16/10/20, agreement on actions in the draft in advance of the submission date (email or Teams collaboration/agreement). Submitted December 2020. Feedback supplied 31st March 2021.
Nominate Leads within the Steering Group to spread the responsibility and continue to drive forward the elements of work such as; • Keeping the website and SharePoint site up to date and working for our technical community. • Promoting these resources, the Technician Commitment and Reviewing impact	Visibility, Recognition, Career Development, Sustainability, Evaluating Impact.	Chair to ensure action plan is being implemented, activity leads reporting to the steering group on progress and development within their areas. These will help towards evaluating overall impact of the Technician Commitment and in subsequent self-assessments.	**31st January 2021**	Complete	Institutional Leads/ Chair	• Keeping the website and SharePoint site up to date and working for our technical community; **Cat Sanderson** • Promoting these resources, **All Steering Group Members** • Reviewing impact; **HR** • Professional Registration Champion **Sheri Scott** • Technical training and development updates; **via the NTU Technician Network SharePoint site**

• Professional Registration Champion • Technical training and development updates						
Fully achieve Employer Champion status and support 2 cohorts of 5 technical staff in the first year	Visibility, Recognition, Career Development	Employer Champion status published, promoted to technical staff via the new SharePoint site, formal recognition of staff who have obtained professional registration – articles on newsroom and Technician's SharePoint site.	**31st December 2021**	Undertaking first cohort of expressions of interest to start in June 2021	HR and Steering Group	November 2020 - the Steering Group are working on confirming approach for the first cohort. 20/4/21 – poster for first expressions of interest shared with technical community, first Q&A session held for the professional registration sponsorship applications 5/5/21
Update Technician Commitment NTU webpages	Visibility	Webpage updated with approved second stage 36-month Action plan published, updated info and Steering Group Membership, link to new Technician SharePoint Hub for internal staff.	**31st December 2020**	Complete	Steering Group Working Group as identified in the meeting action tracker	
Create Technician SharePoint Hub - site curating all relevant info regarding Tech Commitment/ Changemaker/ training/development/ support/contacts etc. in one place for NTU technical colleagues to access	Visibility, Career Development, Recognition, Sustainability	A repository of information, signposting, notifications and guidance for our Technical Colleagues. Curated and updated by Steering Group Members	**31st December 2020**	04/11/20 - SharePoint site *'NTU Technician Network'* has been created - to be populated	Steering Group Working Group as identified in the meeting action tracker. Nominated Steering group member to lead on management of this site; **Dan Gittings**	SharePoint site launched and being updated with info, links and events.
Add Technician commitment link on NTU staff networks pages – visible link to new SharePoint site	Visibility, Career Development, Recognition, Sustainability	Link available and communicated to Technical Colleagues across NTU as a link to the new SharePoint Site	**31st January 2021**		Internal Communications and HR	13/4/21 – still seeking appropriate way to do this 20/4/21 – a link has now been added to the NTU Staff Networks page to signpost staff to the NTU Technician Network SharePoint site

Launch new Webpage, SharePoint resource and staff dashboard tile within the University	Visibility, Career Development, Recognition, Sustainability	Technical staff within the institution are notified of the resource and the information and support it offers.	31st January 2021		Institutional Leads/Chair to progress communication.	Newsroom article to inform all staff of the resource. Heads of School Operations to promote within School technical teams.
Develop regular technician network and discussion platforms as well as an annual technician event	Visibility	Established and regular chat opportunities for technical colleagues to engage in to discuss best practice and network	December 2021		**#TechChat** on Twitter – ShS **Inaugural NTU Technician event** – Cat Sanderson and Sheri Scott	#TechChat on Twitter launched 10th May and to be scheduled every 2nd Monday on Twitter. 20/4/21 – Steering group agreed to plan 1st NTU Technician Event 19/12/2022 – NTU's Inaugural Technician Conference held • Outcome is appetite from all attendees to hold more technical forums and conferences – establish at least one annual conference as the norm
Explore how technicians' time is captured in research grant bids	Visibility	Creating a culture where technical time is captured in all relevant research bids. This will support technical provision and workload.	30th June 2021	In progress	Institutional Leads/ Executive Dean of Research	This is in action in some Schools, others with increasing research grant application need to embed capturing technician time in research grant bids. Executive Dean of Research to speak to Research Governance and REF Manager to raise this issue and determine how technical contribution is recognised. 1st Sept 2021 update; Recognition of technician time in grant applications can be done in two ways: either Directly allocated (DA) or Directly incurred (DI) costs on a research grant. DA cost is indicated a portion of an existing member of staff, DI would be a new staff position. Technician posts do not attract overheads, this is due the TRAC rules as part of FEC. In terms of technician authorship on papers, generally technicians are not reflected in the authorship but there is no reason why, if they have made an original contribution to

						the work, they could not be named as an author. There are some examples of this in the wider research literature but generally technician contributions are found in the acknowledgements section of the paper. Link to a useful paper on this topic: Quantifying the contributions technicians make to research.
Notifying of and promoting internal and external technical awards on a routine basis such as Papin Prizes (HETS), Bioscience Technician of the Year (RSB & UBMA)	Recognition, Visibility	Opportunities promoted on new Technician SharePoint Hub and by HoSO's within Schools	**31st December 2023**		Steering Group and SharePoint Working Group	This is achieved via the NTU Technician Network SharePoint site and on Newsroom articles. Shared across technical School HoSOs to cascade to all School colleagues to raise visibility and encourage nominations
Linking NTU's Technician Commitment with the Institution's Athena Swan action plan and Race Equality Charter	Visibility	Linked actions across the plans and Athena Swan and Race Equality Charter communicated to technical colleagues via the SharePoint Technician Network.	**30 June 2021**	Complete	Institutional Leads/Head of EDI	
Identify relevant training opportunities, internal and external that would support and benefit our technical community across the different disciplines within the University to include technical specific, teaching, management and personal development.	Career Development, Sustainability, Recognition	SharePoint resource populated with signposting to internal and external technical and other relevant training and development for technical colleagues to discuss with their line managers to agree their development requirements and opportunities. Development of NTU development site Thrive@NTU	**31st December 2021**	In progress	Organisational Development and LXP Business Change Group development where the Chair of the Technician Commitment Steering Group contributes.	In progress. Technicians can access training for tutors which is applicable to many technicians due to their contact with students. Technicians can also participate in internal coaching sessions to aid their development. STEMM-CHANGE Changemaker Programme. Planned lunchtime CPD sessions for Technicians, this will also provide an opportunity for reflection along with looking at more specific technologies. Speakers will also attend. NTU LXP staff development tool, Thrive@NTU, is due to be launched in Feb 2022 with specific technician content alongside other professional and personal development tools

Map potential career pathways	Career Development	Establishment and publishing of NTU's technical career pathways. Utilised by Technical Managers and technical colleagues within appraisal and for succession planning.	**31st December 2022**		HR	Review the University of Sheffield technical toolkit and review that of other institutions to determine a strong approach for NTU. Speak to the Technical Development Centre
Explore the potential in technical apprenticeships. The School of Science and Technology already have in place a technical apprenticeship programme and there is interest in if/how this could be implemented within other schools. There is also a national technical apprenticeship standard currently in development	Sustainability, Career Development	Evaluating impact of existing apprenticeship programmes within NTU and sharing findings/recommendations. Evaluating the national technical apprenticeship standard and determining on a School by School basis if applicable and beneficial.	**30 September 2022**		School Technical Managers and Executive Deans	New staff - potential to appoint apprentices • New apprenticeship standards being developed. For example, Professional STEAM Assistant Technician (entry Level 3) and would take 18-24 month to complete • Opportunity for schools to consider appointing apprentices - would need to consider whether these are surplus to existing establishments or instead of • There are standards already agreed in some specialist areas, so opportunities already exist. So far S&T are the only school to appoint technical apprentices.
Explore how the contribution of technicians to research excellence is recognised in REF submissions	Visibility	The contribution of technical staff is recognised in publications and is agreed to be a standard element of the submissions.	**31st December 2021**	Complete	Institutional Leads/ Executive Dean of Research	21.01.2022 – New NTU acknowledgement guidelines for technical contribution to research launched
Review Staff Survey responses for technical colleagues' perceptions about the Technician Commitment themes at an institutional level	Evaluating Impact	A report is generated from the responses that institutional technicians have given to survey. Report reviewed by the Institutional Lead and Chair of the Steering Group and shared with the wider Steering Group. Updates to action plan implemented.	**31st December 2023**	Can Pulse surveys be reviewed for technical feedback specifically?	HR/Institutional Leads/Chair	All staff survey replaced by Pulse surveys. Seek opportunity to apply for funding to undertake the NTDC Technician Survey within NTU. Review for any further actions taking the technical voice into account within our 36-month action plan.
Include reference in the next TEF submission to the essential contribution that technicians make to the student learning experience	Visibility	The contribution of technical staff is recognised in the next TEF submissions and is agreed to be a standard element of the submissions.	**TEF Submission due 24th Jan 2023**		Institutional Leads	TEF data was released on Friday 30th September, and we are now beginning our TEF submission work in earnest.

						05/10/2022 ACTION: All members to send any case studies or examples relating to technicians to KC to include in the TEF submission
Explore the potential to use the academic workload planning system and framework or an alternative to help plan and manage technical resourcing	Career Development, Sustainability, Visibility		**31st December 2023**		HR	
Increase NTU participation in technical exchange placement programmes such as the Changemaker Programme. STEMM-CHANGE has developed an innovative and bespoke 'Changemaker placement programme' built specifically for technical colleagues from underrepresented and minority groups. The project will offer up to 30 placements each of 1-5 days in length (on a flexible basis) to technicians from across the STEMM-CHANGE consortium to enable them to shadow senior colleagues.	Career Development, Sustainability	Hosting 1 or more placements from other institutions and 1 or more external placements undertaken for NTU Technical staff annually through the Programme in 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23.	**30th November 2023**		Nominated Steering Group Changemaker NTU Representative; **Chair**	NTU is a member of the Changemaker programme consortium, NTU technical staff (underrepresented and minority groups) can apply for placements and/or NTU can also host placements. Increase engagement in the programme and aim to build on the successful placement that was hosted by NTU during 2019/20. https://www.stemm-change.co.uk/resources/changemaker/ Note; the programme is funded until summer 2021. Discussion with the Consortium has resulted in positive agreement for this scheme to move into Midlands Innovation Talent Scheme or within the Technician Commitment itself. A number of placements were hosted in academic year 2021/22