

# Technician Commitment

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



**Organisation:** Oxford Brookes University

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### **To provide some context, please provide a brief profile of your organization (up to 250 words)**

Oxford Brookes University is a post-1992 member of the University Alliance mission group, with 18,000 students and 2,800 staff currently on four campuses. The University has four Faculties; Technology Design and Environment, Health and Life Sciences, Humanities and Social Sciences and the Oxford Brookes Business School. In the most recent Teaching Excellence Framework, the panel highlighted the University's 'strategic focus on excellent teaching quality including research-informed teaching'. Oxford Brookes is medium research intensive, with 94% of our research internationally recognised (REF 2014) and with considerably increased research activity in the most recent REF 2021 submission. We have already secured more than £10 million external grant income in the current year. We have a commitment to knowledge exchange; in the 2021 Knowledge Exchange Framework for English universities, Oxford Brookes was ranked in the top 10% for commercialising intellectual property (IP) - through licensing and spinouts; in the top 40% for its research partnerships and work with the public and third sector, and in the top 50% for working with business, recognising its strength in working with external organisations and contributing to the local economy. We aspire to achieve 20% of income from Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange activity by 2035. The University holds the HR Excellence in Research award, Athena Swan Bronze (with some areas silver) and we are a signatory to the Concordat to support the career development of researchers.

### **Please tell us how your organisation defines its technicians**

We have defined technicians as being staff in technical roles who directly support teaching, learning and research.

### **How many technicians are there in your organisation? Please provide some information on where they are based and/or how they are structured (in terms of subject/ discipline/ department)**

There are 51 staff designated as technicians in the University in three of the University's four Faculties (Table 1; there are no technicians identified in the Oxford Brookes Business School).

**Table 1. Distribution and grades of Technician within Faculties**

| <b>Faculty</b>                    | <b>GRD05</b> | <b>GRD06</b> | <b>GRD07</b> | <b>GRD08</b> | <b>GRD09</b> | <b>GRD10</b> |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Health and Life Sciences          | 3            |              | 15           | 5            | 3            | 1            |
| Humanities and Social Sciences    |              | 2            | 1            |              |              |              |
| Technology Design and Environment |              | 2            | 1            | 14           | 2            | 1            |
| Total                             | 3            | 4            | 17           | 20           | 5            | 2            |

The University has a wide range of job titles for technical staff, linked to area, including laboratory manager, laboratory technician, laboratory assistant and technical manager, technical instructor, technical coordinator, demonstrator and technician.

In terms of gender, 82.5% of technicians are male in Technology Design and Environment, and 68% are female in Health and Life Sciences, while in Humanities and Social Sciences there is one male staff member. Higher grades 9 & 10 are predominantly female in HLS and male in TDE. Technicians make up approximately 2.6% of all University staff. The proportion of BAME technical staff (8% identifying as BAME) is in line with sector, but lower than the University total (where 13% identify as BAME). 4% identify as disabled.

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

Prior to becoming signatory of the Technician Commitment, the technical staff of the University were able to participate in the range of staff development courses offered by the University's Oxford Centre for Staff Learning and Development (OCSLD). These included the range of staff induction courses, courses in staff and project management, personal effectiveness, IT training etc. Professional Services staff were also recommended for participation in the Aurora programme. The University also participated in HeATED, with opportunity to participate in the HeATED CPD programme. The University remains a member of HeATED. We had also introduced a pilot scheme that enables contract researchers and research technicians to apply for funding to carry out an independent project through the appointment and supervision of a summer vacation student.

**The Technician Commitment aims to ensure visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability for technical staff across higher education and research. Please tell us of any initiatives your organisation has put in place to address these themes since becoming signatory of the Technician Commitment**

The University response has been impacted for the last 16 months by the Covid pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, the University set up a steering group representing the Faculties where technicians work; created a Technician Commitment web page and organised a technician 'Twitter Takeover' (in February 2021). In preparation for the resumption of on-site working post-Covid, the Steering Group has obtained the input of technicians in development of the University Action Plan. In 2020, leadership of the response to the Commitment was taken on by Professor David Evans, a member of senior University staff and the work and membership of the Steering Group has been expanded.

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

See below.

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

The Action Plan was discussed with a focus group of technical staff. The Steering Group have also engaged with technical staff and their managers as appropriate.

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

The SED including the action plan will be posted on the following site:

<https://www.brookes.ac.uk/staff/human-resources/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/athena-swan/technician-commitment/>

Signed... 

Professor David E Evans

(Technician Commitment Nominated Institutional Lead)

Date: 15<sup>h</sup> July 2021

Signed 

(Technician Commitment Signatory – Leader of Institution)

Date:

## Technician Commitment 24 Month Action Plan – Oxford Brookes University

|  | Up to 12 months   | Evaluation of impact  | 1-2 years   | Evaluation of impact  |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| <b>Visibility</b><br>Ensure that technicians within the organisation are identifiable and that the contribution of technicians is visible within and beyond the institution. | Steering Group including representatives from the technical staff will monitor and develop our actions towards the Technician Commitment further and assess gaps in resource to achieve our aims.                                     | Functional committee meeting regularly with action plan reviewed at each meeting, liaising with appropriate senior staff. | We will ensure Technicians can be identified and are more visible in existing promotional materials and corporate media. They are seen as integral to the teaching, learning and research environment in terms of support and delivery of resources as well as instruction. | Comprehensive list of technical staff of the University with roles and appropriate identifiable job titles.<br><br>Reference to technical staff in print, web and social media. |
|  |   |   | Develop a communications plan for connecting communication channels - website, social media and mailing lists, to maximise opportunities to reach everyone in the technicians' community.   | Extent of engagement of technical staff with technician commitment communications and activities  |
|  | Undertake an audit of the number and type of technical roles within the University.   | Clarified technician job titles and increased visibility.   | Develop a dedicated website for technical staff that will include staff profiles and success stories.   | Usage of web site - number of visits and links; feedback from technical and other staff.  |
|  |   |   | Ensure that technical staff are represented on key faculty and departmental committees.   | Representation leading to technician voice in faculty and departmental committees.  |
|  | Provide opportunity for technicians to meet regularly: Establish a calendar of network meetings, to be held every quarter for individuals to discuss practice, talk about CPD, gaining professional registration and share resources. | Evaluation by participants; increased networking; increased visibility through publicity of events.                       | We will explore the potential to introduce categories for technical staff in the Brookes' People Awards.<br><br>Ensure technical staff are aware of the criteria for the ACE (salary point increase) award scheme.  | Technical staff put forward for- and winning awards; raised awareness and recognition.  |
|  |   |   | Further Twitter 'takeover' by technicians to be planned for 2021/22.  | Standard Twitter metrics- number of retweets, overall participation.  |
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|---|--|---|--|--|
| <p><b>Recognition</b><br/>Support technicians to gain recognition through professional registration</p>   |  |   | <p>We will Review the options for professional technical registration across the technician population. Undertake an audit to understand the current level of professional registration.</p>   | <p>Baseline data on professional registration across the University technical staff and information informing personal career development</p>  |
| <p><b>Career development</b><br/>Enable career progression opportunities for technicians through the provision of a transparent and more navigable career progression roadmap</p> | <p>We will signpost learning and development opportunities available to the whole technician community.</p>  | <p>Level of technician awareness of opportunities for training, personal development and career progression.</p>  | <p>We will increase opportunities for technicians to participate in learning and development programmes.</p> <p>Ensure that technicians and their managers use the opportunity of their Performance and Development Review discussion to focus on development within their current role and discuss career aspirations, where appropriate; not just their performance.</p> | <p>Initial evaluation- participation in I &amp;d programmes and of inclusion of information on opportunities in PDR processes.</p>   |
|   | <p>Develop a set of role profiles against which new roles can be matched and career development needs can be assessed.</p>   | <p>Availability of consistent set of role profiles.</p>   | <p>Extend the work on role profiles to develop clear career pathways for technical staff.</p>  | <p>Availability of example career development pathways and role profiles.</p>  |
| <p><b>Sustainability</b><br/>Ensure the future sustainability of technical skills across the organisation and that technical expertise is fully utilised</p>                      | <p>We will undertake a review of the profiles for technical staff. Provide an evaluation of the cohort based on skills shortages/ needs following a skills audit.</p> <p>Review equality data to ensure that we are able to provide a focus to our attraction and promotion strategies based on any areas of under-representation.</p> | <p>University managers informed of skills gaps now and future.</p> <p>University managers informed of areas of concern to redress under representation.</p> | <p>Review options for the use of apprenticeships in technical areas experiencing skills shortages.</p> <p>Consider measures to increase the participation of under-represented groups in the technical workforce.</p>  | <p>Decision on whether to pursue apprenticeship option made at Faculty level</p> <p>Review of options for positive action measures and decisions whether to implement; impact increased representation of underrepresented groups.</p> |