

Technician Commitment

Evaluating Impact through Self-Assessment & Future Action Planning

Organisation: **The University of Manchester**

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

The University of Manchester was founded in 2004 by bringing together two excellent institutions: the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST) and the Victoria University of Manchester. The merger of these two great universities provided a unique opportunity to set out a bold and ambitious vision for the 'new' University.

Our vision is built upon three core goals. The first, world-class research with the aim to be among the top 25 universities in the world, as measured by the Shanghai Jiao Tong Index. Going forward, we will be measuring our position not just by this ranking, but by international league tables more widely and by the impact of our research.

The second of our core goals is the provision of an outstanding learning and student experience. We want to ensure a higher quality experience for all our students, as measured by the National Student Survey (NSS), with a target of at least 90% student satisfaction by 2020.

If our first two goals ask 'what are we good at?', then our third goal, social responsibility, gets to the heart of the question 'what are we good for?'. We make a huge contribution to society, through our research, our education and a wide range of remarkable activities undertaken by our staff, students and alumni.

This focus on quality and distinctiveness forms the foundation of our University and guides future developments in the pursuit of world class knowledge and education.

Please tell us how your organisation defines its technicians:

Technicians are highly skilled experts in technology and science. Technicians critically support the University's academic pursuits in education and research.

Technicians form the collective known as Technical Services which includes the positions of; Apprentice Technicians, Assistant Technicians, Technicians, Senior Technicians, Technical Managers, Experimental Officers and Senior Experimental Officers.

Technical Services provide integral support across the entire University for teaching (undergraduate & post-graduate); research; infrastructure; core facilities; workshops; laboratories.

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):

We have 876 Technicians in the University of Manchester the majority of which are Research Technicians.

The three Faculties of; ♦ Biology, Medicine & Health, ♦ Humanities, ♦ Science & Engineering, span the two cities of Manchester and Salford, residing in more than 50 different buildings including 5 University Teaching Hospitals.

Technicians operate in the fields of:

Faculty of Biology, Medicine & Health

School of Biological Sciences:

Divisions of;
Cell Matrix Biology and Regenerative Medicine;
Evolution and Genomic Sciences
Infection, Immunity and Respiratory Medicine
Molecular and Cellular Function
Musculoskeletal and Dermatological Sciences
Neuroscience and Experimental Psychology.

School of Medical Sciences:

Divisions of;
Cancer Sciences
Cardiovascular Sciences
Dentistry
Developmental Biology and Medicine
Diabetes, Endocrinology and Gastroenterology
Medical Education

School of Health Sciences:

Divisions of
Human Communication
Development and Hearing
Informatics, Imaging and Data Sciences
Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work
Pharmacy and Optometry
Population Health, Health Services Research and Primary Care
Psychology and Mental Health.

Biological Services Facility

Faculty of Humanities

School of Arts, Languages and Cultures

School of Environment, Education and Development

Faculty of Science and Engineering

School of Chemical Engineering and Analytical Science

School of Chemistry

School of Computer Science
School of Earth and Environmental Sciences
School of Electrical and Electronic Engineering
School of Materials
School of Mechanical, Aerospace and Civil Engineering
School of Physics and Astronomy

Thus demonstrating the diversity of expert professional technical support ranging from Anatomy to Astronomy and from Geology to Graphene. Technicians are located in more than 40 different buildings, some are based off-campus, for example;

Withington, Manchester - Wolfson Molecular Imaging Centre and Manchester Cancer Research Centre
Cumbria - Dalton Nuclear Institute
Cheshire - Jodrell Bank Observatory
Oxfordshire - Diamond Facility Light Source
Cheshire) – Paterson Institute CRUK, Alderley Park

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:

Two positions of Faculty Heads of Technical Services were formed with responsibility for 98% of the Faculty Technicians.

We have a good and increasing knowledge of Technical Staff, including their locations, line management, activity type, recruitment and skills. We have also rationalised many of the titles for Technician posts and continue to do so, across the entire University.

Distinct and identifiable structures for Technicians with clear line management provided by Technical Managers with hands-on technical experience.

Bespoke Technical Apprenticeship Programme created with a clear approach to provide significant technical experience, Knowledge-Skills-Behaviours learning, including opportunities aligned to a diverse placement-rotation across all the University Faculties.

The University's exemplarily Staff Learning & Development Team provides dedicated training partners to support Technical Services.

Pan-University approach to: awards, recognition, HR policy, strategy and development for Technical Services.

Shadowing of colleagues in other parts of the University has always been encouraged and often arranged. Closely related are the high number of secondments available in the University, which provide a more significant development opportunity.

Formation of the University's 'Technical Excellence at Manchester' [TEaM]. Our Technical Staff network to raise the profile of Technical Staff, to recognise their contribution, and to empower career development. This Group created for example; Networking opportunities, internal communications, seminars, workplace tours.

The appointment of an Academic Technician Champion, Professor Colin Bailey [Faculty Dean and Vice-President]

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

We have continued with increased vigour to ensure that Technicians are encouraged and supported to apply for internal and external awards. (eg. European Papin 2017 award, University of Manchester PSS award 2017 overall winner). (PSS – Professional Support Staff)

Active approach to ensuring achievements (awards, publications, widening participation, initiatives) are publicised as widely as possible.

CPD and professional registration is supported and appropriately encouraged. Training and development whilst already easily accessible and well resourced, Technicians are encouraged and reminded that they are able to utilise the full benefits of these opportunities, including part-time, grant funded or apprenticeship colleagues.

Department visits outside a Technician's usual workplace provides useful insight and potential opportunities for their future. (eg. shadowing).

Further profiling of existing Technician posts provides helpful insight to roles and opportunities. More recently, the Gatsby Foundation have assisted with professional role publicity. Technicians Make it Happen is our most recent venture

We ensure that Technicians have a news item or feature in our monthly University communications and our Faculties' monthly communications, both of which are issued across the University to all staff.

Evidently, and after careful consideration, we have committed our University to the national 'Technician Commitment' initiative. This has consolidated some of our existing aims, moderated some aims and through the initiative and working with other neighbouring Universities we have generated some new initiatives.

We see our Technician Commitment as not being restricted to this current summary document, but for it be part of a further enhancing a dynamic evolution, recognising that an adaptable, contemporary and yet forward planning approach will be the most appropriate way for a sustainable future for Technicians, and the institution they critically support.

Our Institutional Leads have met with the three Faculty Deans, Vice Presidents individually to convey our concerns and aims for Technical Support. In addition, we requested their understanding and support for the Technician Commitment which was unanimously and positively received. We have repeated the process with all the Faculty Directors of Operations and gained the same understanding and support.

As Technical Excellence at Manchester [TEaM] was already in existence we have consulted with the TEaM Steering Group to ensure compatibility and convergence when appropriate with the Technician Commitment. Whilst the aims are entirely harmonious, TEaM will maintain what is importantly unique for our Technicians and our University in Manchester.

Our Institutional Leads meet monthly with our equivalent at Manchester Metropolitan University, and more recently with Salford University. We are considering other neighbouring institutions going forward.

We have successfully created and recruited to the post of University Technical Apprenticeship Programme Co-ordinator. This post will progress the development of the Programme to further successful outcomes in scope and quality of an already award winning standard.

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):

We will become a National Technician Centre Partner and will work closely with the team there to contribute to several initiatives that will be important for Technicians locally and nationally. [Visibility, Career Development, Sustainability]

We will conduct a current baseline skills audit to inform more comprehensively our current understanding of skills held in the University. [Career Development, Sustainability]

Shadowing to be promoted and facilitated more widely to provide insight to opportunities that otherwise would remain unknown. [Career Development]

Assisting the shaping our Staff Learning & Development programmes to provide more tailored learning for Technical Staff. [Career Development, Sustainability]

Technical Staff newsletter for improved communications. [Visibility, Recognition]

Improve recognition and acknowledgment of Technician contribution to publications. [Visibility, Recognition]

Proposal Validation Process developed to assess and validate new ideas and proposals. [Sustainability]

Determine age profile to identify the potential loss of technical skills. [Sustainability]

Ensure the visibility and recognition of all Technical Staff and that they are able to be linked in with the Technical Community. [Visibility, Recognition]

Develop a career guidance pathway to improve clarity of career options and progression. [Career Development]

Mentoring-Coaching-Shadowing opportunities provided and encouraged to Technical Staff. [Career Development, Sustainability]

Develop the scope and depth of the Technical Apprenticeship Programme. To feed into a potential skills gap when evidence-based. To include Knowledge-Skills-Behaviours learning. To broaden skills repertoire at different levels. [Career Development, Sustainability]

Improvement of cost recovery of Technical contribution to research and education. [Recognition, Sustainability]

External networking and engagement facilitated and encouraged. [Visibility, Recognition, Career Development]

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

We have the Technician voice embedded in all the work we have done in the previous 18 months in forming and developing the Technical Excellence at Manchester [TEaM].

To form TEaM, we performed surveys, feedback events (including at conferences) and feedback workshops. Whilst we were clear of TEaM's principles, our objectives are still being formed by seeking Technicians' views. The feedback and views collated have shaped the direction of our Technician Commitment at Manchester. This essential element will continue to inform the dynamic evolution of our Technician Commitment, throughout its development, indefinitely.