

## Technicians Commitment Action Plan

### What is the Technician Commitment?

The Technician Commitment is a university and research institution initiative, led by a steering group of sector bodies, with support from the Science Council and the Gatsby Charitable Foundation's Technicians Make It Happen campaign. The Commitment aims to ensure visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability for technicians working in higher education and research, across all disciplines. Universities and research institutes are invited to become signatories of the Technician Commitment and pledge action against the key challenges affecting their technical staff.

#### **The commitment focusses on four key areas:**

- Visibility
- Recognition
- Career Development
- Sustainability

### Why is it important?

Technicians are particularly vital to the success of the UK's universities and research institutes. They are a highly skilled workforce with a diverse range of expertise, underpinning the key activities across organisations, and providing the technical expertise essential to supporting research and knowledge transfer. Alongside this, many technicians are researchers and teachers in their own right. They play an important part in the development of the UK's future STEM workforce by teaching and developing the technical skills students require to pursue a future career in research, academia and/or industry.

Despite the importance of technicians, their role is not well recognised and their career and professional development often overlooked. The aging technical workforce also means that large numbers of highly skilled technicians are retiring every year, taking their knowledge and experience with them. The UK now faces an identified shortage of technicians, which poses a serious threat to our innovative strength and global competitiveness, and it is estimated that there will be a demand for 700,000 new technicians by 2020.

As a supporter of the Technician Commitment, Aston University proposes a range of activities to recognise, improve visibility, clarify career development and ensure sustainability for technician related roles (see table below). It is hoped that these activities will also go some way to attract individuals with technical talent to the university and encourage the upskilling of individuals, from the local community, to move into technical related fields. The impact of these activities will be evidence through annual reports to the Science Council (the criteria for reporting has yet to be confirmed).

| Activity   | Lead      | Timeframe | Status | Comments |
|--|-----------|-----------|--------|----------|
| <b>Visibility</b>  |           |           |        |          |
| Raise the visibility and appreciation of the technical staff via posters   | JA/MD     | P2        |        |          |
| Encourage the use of Yammer group to raise profile of staff, create technical community, create forum space and use as communication method  | JA        | P1        |        |          |
| Relaunch intranet page as a first point of resources and news (linked to Twitter and Yammer group)   | MD        | P1        |        |          |
| Ensure that TC Focus group has regular representation from Senior Leaders to give the group effective voice  | TG        | P1,2,3    |        |          |
| <b>Recognition</b>   |           |           |        |          |
| Continue to offer Professional Registration subscriptions to Technical Staff, this would also be a call for tech staff to nominate interest  | CF        | P1,2,3    |        |          |
| Formalise one member of the TC group to work with marketing on raising technician profile and recognition through internal Aston media, done on a Rota basis to enable experience to be gained for all staff | TG        | P1,2,3    |        |          |
| Create regular comms such as Technician Quarterly newsletter to highlight all areas of TC activity, written from techs to techs  | TG<br>Rep | P1,2,3    |        |          |
| Gain commitment from Exec on the position of recognising technician contributions to research work   | JA        | P1        |        |          |
| Nominate technical staff for awards, this will be done by the Engagement group with an email sent out for calls for nominations from staff and students  | TG        | P1,2,3    |        |          |
| Twitter piece on the view and appreciation of technical staff supporting teaching and research   | JA/TG     | P2        |        |          |
| <b>Career Development</b>  |           |           |        |          |
| Establish apprenticeship options for mid-career development of technical staff   | OD        | P2        |        |          |
| Outline career pathways for technical staff to related professions   | HR        | P1        |        |          |

|  |       |        |  |   |
|--|-------|--------|--|---|
| Create resources for career development and training for MDC (PDR) for staff and managers with a view to tailor this with technicians in mind  | OD    | P1     |  |   |
| Review Technical job roles and create job families – present these as career pathway options   | JA/TM | P1     |  |   |
| Create mentoring partnerships through Midlands Innovations partnership   | TG    | P1,2,3 |  |   |
| Broker equipment sharing agreements and collaboration with partner organisations in Midland Innovations and Beyond   | TG    | P1,2,3 |  | Respecting social distancing arrangements around Covid-19                   |
| Broker with partner universities in Midland Innovations and Beyond to find job secondment/shadowing opportunities and have in operation by end of year   | TG    | P1,2,3 |  | Respecting university provisions around Covid-19                            |
| Review Training provisions for technical staff, look at creating training courses which technical staff can relate to  | OD    | P1,2,3 |  |   |
| Obtain training on registration from Science Council   | JA    | P1     |  |   |
| Regsiter as a Science Council Employers Champion   | CF/JA | P1     |  |   |
| <b>Sustainability</b>  |       |        |  |   |
| Analyse current workforce demographics and leaver's data and establish trends – use these to inform future people planning   | TG    | P2     |  |   |
| Create plan to address underrepresentation in technical staff profiles   | TG    | P1     |  |   |
| Commit to advertising Technical roles in broader sources, including targeted recruitment to increase diversity e.g. via social media, diversity websites such as BMEjobs, disabilityjobs, LGBT jobs as well as job centre to attract wider applicant pools | CF    | P1     |  |   |
| Create knowledge sharing toolkit to support KE activity  | MD    | P3     |  |   |
| Create regular internal technical knowledge sharing events sessions such as lunch and learn  | TG    | P2     |  |   |
| Invite technicians from Midland Innovations partners to participate in KE activities   | TG    | P1,2,3 |  |   |
| Investigate potential for entry level technical apprenticeships  | JA/TM | P1     |  | Will be dependent on any institutional level hiring restrictions post-Covid |

### Abbreviations:

- TG – Technical Group – the internal group directing the Technician Commitment work at Aston University
- JA – Jiteen Ahmed, Technical Manager
- MD – Mark Dolphin, OD Business Partner for LHS/AMS and TC Representative
- TR – Tracey Roberts, OD Business Partner for EAS
- CF – Claire Freeman, HR Associate Director for Schools
- TM – Technical Managers – newly appointed roles in EAS
- TG Rep – Nominated Rep (TBC) from the group who will be social media liaison

(P1) Phase 1 – Year 1 Jan 2021-December 2021

(P2) Phase 2 – Year 2 Jan 2022-December 2022

(P3) Phase 3 – Year 3 Jan 2023-December 2023