OUR TECHNICIAN COMMITMENT

WARWICK
THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

INTRODUCTION

It's nearly five years since the University of Warwick signed up for the Technician's Commitment and we've achieved a huge amount in that time. Thanks to the commitment from our Senior Management Team and our engagement with Technicians we've introduced things that will make a difference to our Technicians, and we aim to do more.

Throughout this brochure you will read about things that we have achieved in our initial two year action plan and what we want to achieve throughout the course of our new three year Action Plan. We can't do this without the help of our Technical Community and you will also read about ways that you can feed into the Technicians Commitment and really make a difference.

Warwick became a signatory to the Technician Commitment in 2017 and since then, a huge amount of work has been undertaken on job families and career development. Of course, there is still much to do; but we are committed to the work that this requires. Now, we are involving the Technical Community with the project, listening, and focussing on things that are important to our Technicians at this time. This is vital and important work in its own right. But there is an added element to this. It has become increasingly clear to all staff, not just those involved in particular parts of the university, just what a massive role our Technical Staff played during the pandemic. We aim to build on this visibility and recognition over the course of our action plan. I hope that this is a very exciting time to be a Technician, with more opportunities available than ever before. We want to make you aware, and enable you to take advantage of these opportunities, whilst also listening to how we can support you further.

Professor Stuart Croft, Vice-Chancellor
& President of University of Warwick

In this brochure, you can read about some of the outcomes from the first phase of our Technician Commitment Action Plan and see how to engage further to shape the next phase.

The Technician Commitment is all about increasing visibility, recognition, career progression and sustainability in a way that benefits technical staff: we will build this together as a community through on-going evolution of the Action Plan, shaped by those whom it benefits most. Greater engagement of technical staff in the life and decision making of the University is part of the plan, as for instance in the recently formed Research Culture Forum that includes students, technicians and academics as equal voices.

The TechNet@Warwick website has been created to highlight opportunities and celebrate achievements of technical staff – contributions and suggestions of what you want to see there are always welcome. You can also read about networking and development opportunities designed specifically for technical staff, as on-line and in-person events, especially those provided through the TALENT project that has started to bring together technicians from across the Midlands as well as promoting the technical workforce at a national level. There has been really positive feedback from those who have attended these events and we hope many more technical staff will benefit from a varied program in future, but please do tell us if you really want an event focussed on something different.

I hope that you enjoy this brochure and engage in opportunities to help our vision of making things happen for technicians.

Professor David Leadley,
Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research

HOW IS THE TECHNICIAN COMMITMENT BEING IMPLEMENTED AT WARWICK?

The work on our Technician Commitment is overseen by a Steering Group chaired by Professor David Leadley, Deputy Pro Vice Chancellor for Research.

Our Technical Services Managers are also members together with the Research Technology Engagement Manager with input from HR. Everything is discussed and decided at the Steering Group and then sub-groups are formed to carry forward the ideas. Input from our Technical Community takes place through Focus Groups, informal chats, organised update events and a recently formed Technician Sub-Group. This input is crucial to the success of the project and we will continue to engage in this way encouraging Technicians to work with us on smaller projects in the future.

The first two-year action plan (July 2018-December 2020) saw work mainly focussed on the formulation of a career progression pathway and Technical Job Family. Technicians have been mapped onto the career progression pathway (via generic job titles) effective from April 2021. This will enable us to track any turnover and career progression more easily and enables Technicians to see the options that might be available to them in the future, should they wish to take them. A lot of work has also been undertaken on a development programme, placement programme and culminated with the launch of a work-shadowing process for technical staff, accompanied by a commitment from the University to authorise at least two day per annum for development activity to support career development opportunities for technical staff.

OUR NEXT ACTION PLAN HAS BEEN DIVIDED INTO KEY THEMES/AREAS AS FOLLOWS:

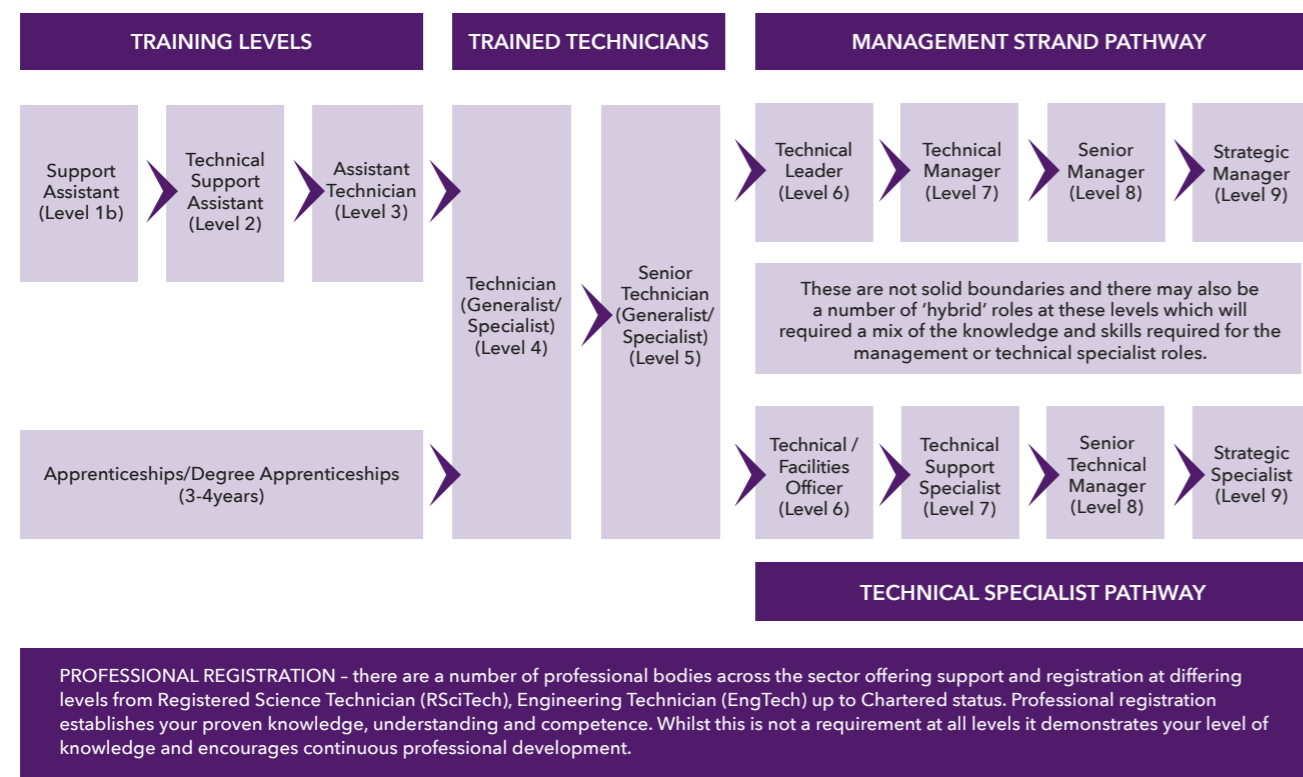| Recruitment, progression and enhancing the skills of the Technical Community	Engaging with and recognising the Technical Community	Visibility of the Technical Community	Technicians voice in an HE environment	Support mechanisms for our Technical Community

The details of this action plan can be viewed at https://warwick.ac.uk/research/technicians.

This is a living document and we welcome feedback and input into this and anything else relating to the Technician Commitment. There are a number of ways you can provide feedback but the most important thing is that you engage. The slogan for the Technicians Commitment is 'Technicians Make it Happen'. This has certainly proved to be the case over the course of the pandemic. Your input into the Technician Commitment is vital. We need you to help us make a difference.
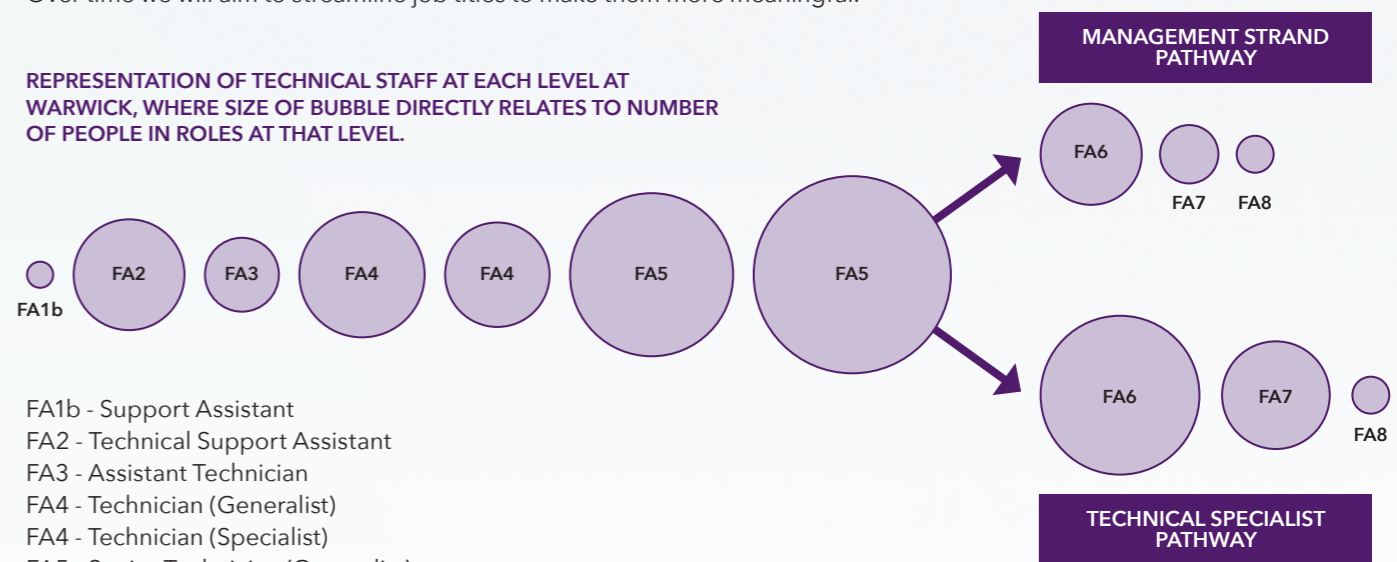
CAREER PROGRESSION AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CAREER PATHWAY/ USE OF GENERIC JOB TITLES

The career pathway was formulated to demonstrate the career pathways that might be available to our technical staff. There are a number of routes that your career may take and this can sometimes mean making a sideways move to obtain different skills and knowledge to help you progress. To simplify this we have introduced generic job titles which enable us immediately to recognise where you sit on the career pathway in terms of grade and strand. Our generic titles have been simplified further since the original career pathway was introduced and this is shown below:

TRAINING LEVELS	TRAINED TECHNICIANS	MANAGEMENT STRAND PATHWAY

Support Assistant (Level 1b)	Technical Support Assistant (Level 2)	Assistant Technician (Level 3)

Technician (Generalist/Specialist) (Level 4)

Senior Technician (Generalist/Specialist) (Level 5)

Technical Leader (Level 6)	Technical Manager (Level 7)	Senior Manager (Level 8)	Strategic Manager (Level 9)

These are not solid boundaries and there may also be a number of 'hybrid' roles at these levels which will required a mix of the knowledge and skills required for the management or technical specialist roles.

Apprenticeships/Degree Apprenticeships (3-4years)

Technical / Facilities Officer (Level 6)	Technical Support Specialist (Level 7)	Senior Technical Manager (Level 8)	Strategic Specialist (Level 9)

TECHNICAL SPECIALIST PATHWAY

PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION – there are a number of professional bodies across the sector offering support and registration at differing levels from Registered Science Technician (RSciTech), Engineering Technician (EngTech) up to Chartered status. Professional registration establishes your proven knowledge, understanding and competence. Whilst this is not a requirement at all levels it demonstrates your level of knowledge and encourages continuous professional development.

We are also formulating a roadmap of roles which aims to give you an indication of the type of roles that are undertaken at each level/career strand in the University. This roadmap outlines the current job titles of technical staff at the University. It is very difficult to assess what grade a role is from the title. It is often difficult to understand what a person does from their job title too. Over time we will aim to streamline job titles to make them more meaningful.

REPRESENTATION OF TECHNICAL STAFF AT EACH LEVEL AT WARWICK, WHERE SIZE OF BUBBLE DIRECTLY RELATES TO NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN ROLES AT THAT LEVEL.

FA1b | FA2 | FA3 | FA4 | FA4 | FA5 | FA5

MANAGEMENT STRAND PATHWAY

FA6 | FA7 | FA8

TECHNICAL SPECIALIST PATHWAY

FA6 | FA7 | FA8

FA1b - Support Assistant
FA2 - Technical Support Assistant
FA3 - Assistant Technician
FA4 - Technician (Generalist)
FA4 - Technician (Specialist)
FA5 - Senior Technician (Generalist)
FA5 - Senior Technician (Specialist)

| Management Strand Pathway	Technical Specialist Pathway
FA6- Technical Leader	FA6- Technical/Facilities Officer
FA7- Technical Manager	FA7- Technical Support Specialist
FA8- Senior Manager	FA8- Senior Technical Manager

Over the course of the next 3-year action plan we will be looking at the recruitment process for technical staff. It is an area that the University often struggles to recruit into and, according to the Gatsby Foundation it is well known that, nationally, this is an aging workforce in an area that needs to grow to meet the demand from employers over the coming decade. We have already started to work with other Universities in the Midlands to advertise technical roles amongst this Midlands Innovation network of universities. We will also be looking at where we recruit nationally, how we recruit technical staff and what we can do to advertise Warwick as an employer of choice for technicians in the future. This will involve promoting the Technician as a career choice for the future.
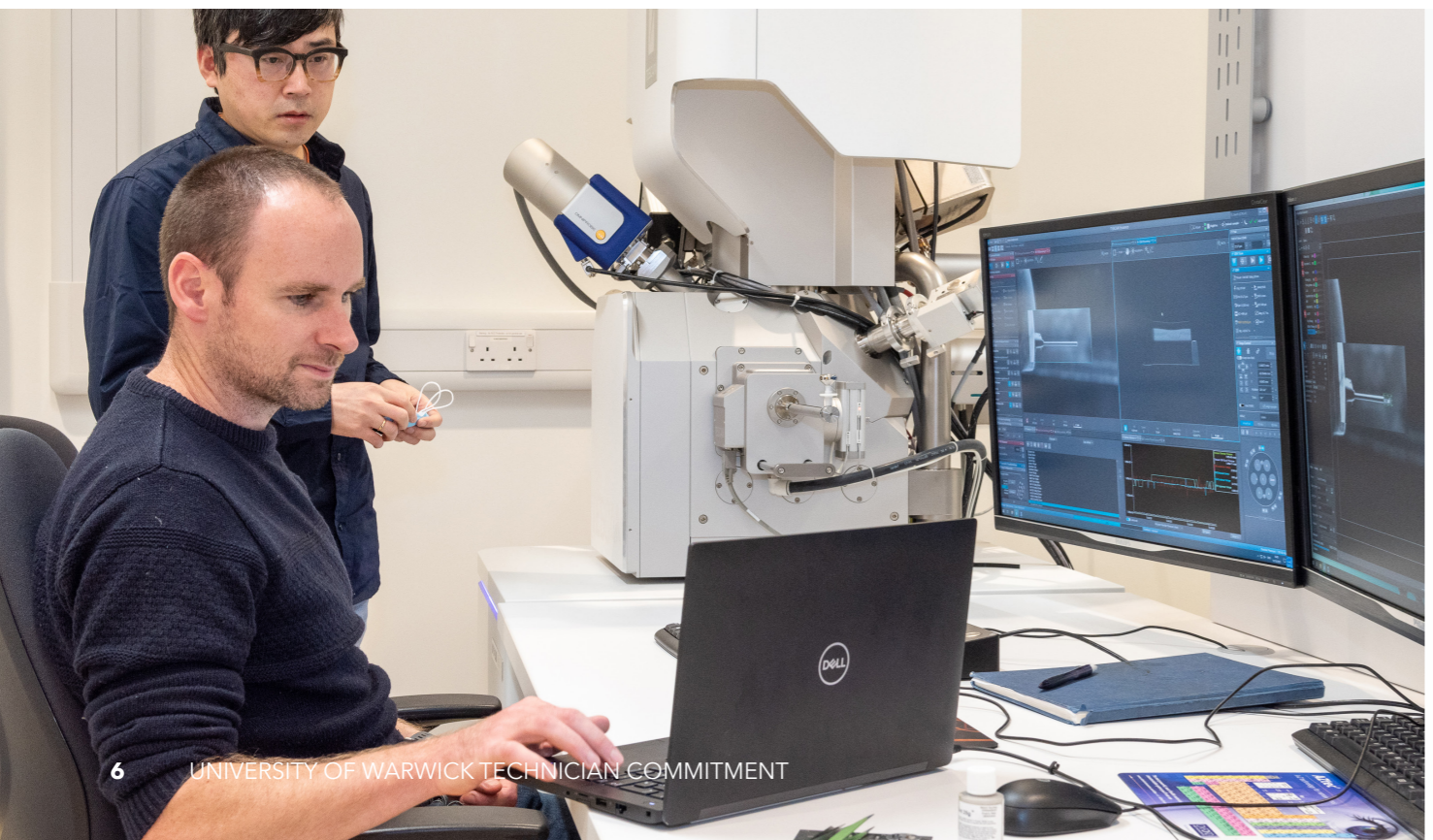
TALENT

TALENT is a Research England funded project which leads and influences change to advance status and opportunity for technical skills, roles and careers in UK higher education and research. TALENT provides technical staff at the eight Midlands Innovation institutions, including Warwick, with access to a wide range of bespoke training and funds.

BESPOKE TRANSFERABLE SKILLS TRAINING

TALENT provides a wide range of training programmes and an open programme of stand-alone sessions. The programmes include topics such as leadership and project management. The open programme includes a wide range of topics such as impactful presentations, persuasive business cases and critical reflection.

The team also host Festivals of Learning, with a condensed programme of events across a couple of weeks, with something to interest everyone!

For the latest courses and to sign up please visit https://www.mitalent.ac.uk/Learning

FUNDS

TALENT offers a range of funds that you can access. If you are thinking of attending a conference or a course to gain specific skills outside the training programme, you can apply for the Technical Conference and Skills Fund. If you want to spend some time at another Midlands Innovation institution to share best practice or learn a new technique, the Technical Placement Scheme is open for you. Or if you have spoken to a others across Midlands Innovation and see a gap in training, this may be possible to fill using the Collaborative Technical Training Fund. Website links are below to find out more:

Technical Conference and Skills Fund
www.mitalent.ac.uk/Technical-Conference-and-Skills-Fund

Technical Placement Scheme
www.mitalent.ac.uk/Technical-Placement-Scheme

Collaborative Technical Training Fund
www.mitalent.ac.uk/Technician-Led-Training-Fund

KNOWLEDGE CAFES

Technical staff across the midlands have come together to form knowledge cafes. These give the opportunity to share best practice, learn from others and help make progress around a particular theme. Currently, there are five knowledge cafes: Apprenticeship, Health and Safety, Outreach, Remote Technical Training and Sustainability. To find out more visit: https://www.mitalent.ac.uk/Knowledge-Cafes

DRIVING CULTURE CHANGE FOR THE TECHNICAL COMMUNITY

TALENT is piloting innovative ways of working to deliver culture change and strengthen technical career opportunities. Themes include research culture, developing the technical voice, equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and knowledge exchange. To find out more see: https://www.mitalent.ac.uk/Technicians-as-Partners

THE TALENT COMMISSION

In February 2022, the TALENT programme has launched The TALENT Commission report, which has gathered new strategic insights into the UK's technical workforce in higher education and research. This was the outcome of 20 months of in-depth research, stakeholder engagement and evidence gathering within the sector. The report sets out a vision for the future of the UK's technical talent and includes 16 overarching recommendations to guide delivery of this vision, as well as a series of targeted recommendations for specific stakeholder groups.

Warwick is looking at how we can incorporate the recommendations from the report into our Technician Commitment action plan. To find out more about the TALENT Commission, visit: www.mitalent.ac.uk/theTALENTcommission

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

The TALENT Technical Careers Manager is Dr Michelle Jackson. Michelle has worked in a number of Universities across the UK, in post-doctoral, technical, technical management and operational roles. She is an advocate for technicians and will be working with technicians across the Midlands Innovation Group.

You can contact Michelle to discuss any aspect of your career development via email (Michelle.Jackson@nottingham.ac.uk).

Advice that you might want to seek may include:

- 1-2-1 career discussions, including exploring career options and developing a career development plan
- Coaching and mentoring
- Options for development activities that can help you advance your career
- Advice about gaining registration, which level would be appropriate, which Professional Body would be right for you, and how to fill in the necessary documentation

The following tips may help you when thinking about developing your technical career:

- Discover what you want to do – research career options, think about what you most enjoy doing, create a career development plan
- Take opportunities to try different things – learn a new technique, join a committee, take on a project, you may discover that you enjoy something new
- Make the most of your development review – this is your opportunity to discuss career goals and development activities that you can undertake with your line manager

Development opportunities to help position yourself for next steps:
- Soft skills training through TALENT
- Work shadowing scheme
- Funds including placement programmes across MI
- Professional registration fund
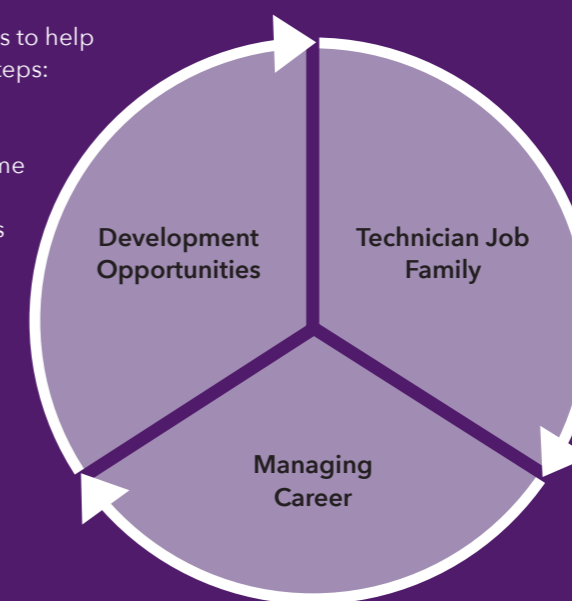
Transparent Technician Job Family implemented:
- Provides what is expected at each grade
- Example roles from across campus
- Proposed career pathway

Development Opportunities

Technician Job Family

Managing Career

Support with career management to help identify next steps:
- More tailor made support and opportunities for managing technical careers
- Dedicated Technical Careers Manager
- Coaching available to help guide you

NETWORKING AND ENGAGEMENT

What is a network/networking?

A network is a group of people with similar interests or skills and networking takes place when there is interaction/engagement between individuals to exchange information and develop professional or social contacts. Networking can take place on a formal or informal basis. For example, you might meet someone external to the organisation who works in a similar area and exchange contact details with them or you might meet someone at an internal meeting who has skills that you would like to learn about or knows someone that does. Networking can sometimes be about who you know rather than what you know.

Why do I need to network?

Being part of a network may help you to develop contacts in other groups or departments which may be of benefit to you in gaining skills and knowledge to assist you in developing career opportunities. It might be that you network with individuals occupying roles that you are interested in becoming skilled to undertake or with individuals who may be able to help you in opening up opportunities to progress your career. However, networking isn't just about career development but is important at work in general. Engaging with others is key in helping to build communities across an organisation and the sharing of knowledge and skills making a difference.

How do I start to build a network?

Think about the people you know and may have lost touch with and the places that you go to, or perhaps should make an effort to go to in the future.

Join in webinars or go to events/opendays. There are also many online networking opportunities/forums that you can join. Keep up to date with the latest news/technology in your work area and discuss this with other people. Keep a note of individuals you meet and what you discuss. You might not need their information now but this might be useful to you in the future. Importantly, keep in touch with people, don't just wait for them to contact you.

What might go wrong?

Build up relationships but don't pester people or waste their time. Show an interest in others and their aspirations, don't just make it all about what you want. Don't be shy to ask for help from individuals, don't assume that they know what it is that you want. Networking and socialising doesn't come naturally to all of us and it may take time to build up a network of contacts or you might just have one or two.

Where should I do it?

Networking can take place anywhere, in a formal or informal working environment or socially with friends and colleagues.

Are there examples of networking?

There are many examples of how informal networking has helped individuals and also saved time. During the past year there have been several examples such as sharing documentation (rather than starting from scratch), of offers of help to deal with equipment emergencies (that would have taken time to sort out), information being shared (that individuals would not have been aware of otherwise).

There is no right and wrong – whatever works for you is fine!

RESEARCH CULTURE

At the University of Warwick, a positive research culture is at the heart of its research mission to create a fair, collaborative and supportive environment in which to work, inclusive to all faculty – from early career and doctoral researchers, to technicians, research leaders and experienced professors. People are the central focus and they should have the confidence to question and challenge.

The University has a Research Culture Forum to discuss the current research culture, share best practice and influence future developments in this area. The Forum recently funded a project directed at 'Advancing Visibility, Knowledge and Collaborative Opportunities for Research Technical Professionals'. Sitting within this forum is Sarah Bennett, a technical representative (pictured right), who recognises the importance of visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability of our Technical workforce. Sarah is open to hearing about successes and issues around the Research Culture that Technicians experience, and to feed these back to the Forum. By working with the Research Culture forum and the Technician Commitment we aim to review the feedback and implement any necessary changes.

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

Knowledge exchange (KE) is defined as 'a collaborative, creative endeavour that translates knowledge and research into impact in society and the economy'[1] by the Knowledge Exchange Concordat (KEC). This takes many potential forms such as:

- involvement in the creation of innovation and intellectual property (IP)
- working with industry
- enabling access to facilities or providing analysis
- public engagement
- delivering training and development

Technical staff play an increasingly important role in both the lead and support of the above, and this needs to be recognised and made visible. Alongside existing research and teaching frameworks, the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) aims to measure our KE outputs, with KEC supporting advances in outputs.

To make the fantastic contributions of our technical staff visible and rewarded, we ask that you let us know when you have delivered work that could be classed as contributing to KE (send details to technicians@warwick.ac.uk). We can ensure those responsible for the institutional submissions and strategies for KEC and KEF are aware, and the work is recognised.

1 www.keconcordat.ac.uk/about/

EQUIPMENT SHARING

We know our technical staff are integral to making equipment available to a wide range of researchers, including those externally, and subsequently training or providing analysis services to researchers at all levels.

With the sustainability and sharing of equipment high on funder priorities, we are regularly speaking to funders to help demonstrate how technical staff are driving this agenda.

This is supported by both the seedcorn access available to other institutions through the EPSRC funded Warwick Analytical Science Centre (WASC) and the Research England funded TALENT Technician Led Equipment Sharing. We will capture case studies from both these projects to showcase how our technical staff have furthered the research of those doing research at other institutions.

If you want to get involved with the TALENT Technician Led Equipment Sharing, you can do so here: www.mitalent.ac.uk/Advertise-your-equipment-/-facility-here
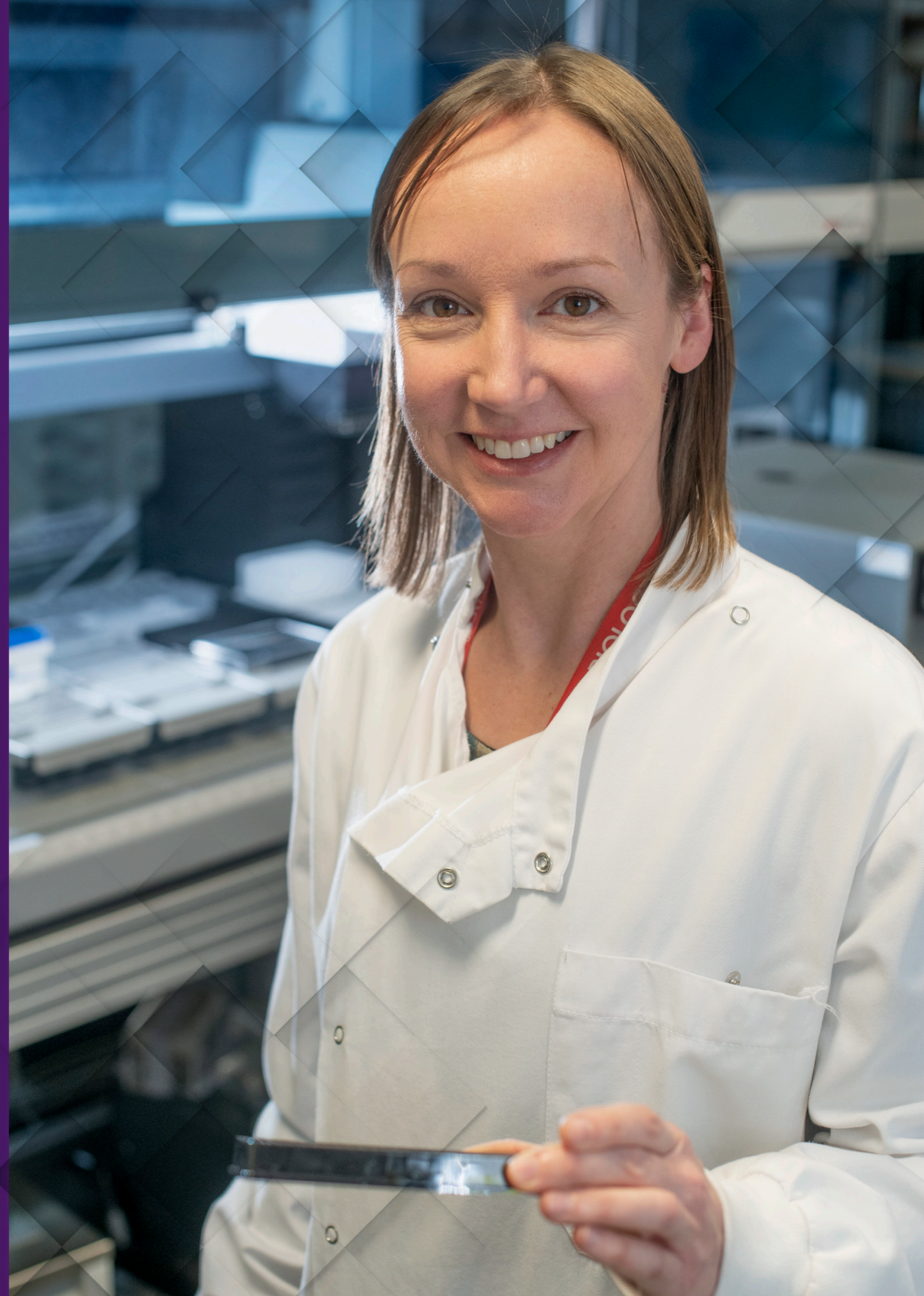
SUSTAINABILITY

Our Technician Commitment Action Plan looks at issues around the sustainability of technical staff at Warwick, and technicians also play a key role in the financial sustainability of the institution. However, below we focus on how our technical staff are already playing a key role in campus wide environmental sustainability and how you can get involved.

Sustainability is a key topic and improving the sustainability within our laboratories and processes is key to Warwick helping towards a sustainable future. Technical staff are often in a good position to help identify and implement sustainable changes. Below we hear from technical staff involved with sustainability and our Estates colleagues who have been working alongside them.

The Laboratory Efficiency Assessment Framework (LEAF) developed at University College London, is a webtool which allows laboratories to work towards a defined standard, bronze, silver or gold. LEAF provides a systematic path to improving lab sustainability. It contains useful additional resources and is versatile enough to allow for future developments and updates.

Our central Sustainability team reached out to my line manager to help promote the green agenda at SLS/WMS and also record any green actions; she then reached out to me to see if it was something I'd be interested in helping with. I joined LEAN (Laboratory Efficiency Action Network) and went to meetings – we heard about the LEAF pilot and signed up. My line manager's support was key initially. I really enjoyed getting involved. The main part of my job is supporting the Genomics Facility and specialised equipment within the School of Life Sciences – the technical nitty gritty - so becoming involved in Lab Sustainability has very much added another dimension to my working life.

For those who take part in LEAF, it will help you to think about the lab from the perspective of sustainability, I feel that LEAF can educate and inform your mindset. On a more pragmatic level, we will be required to evidence what we are doing towards sustainability more and more; LEAF provides lab accreditation.

My top lab sustainability tip is traffic light stickers (switch off after use, switch off at the end of the day, ask before switching off) on lab equipment – people often do not feel confident that they have permission to switch off communal equipment; stickers are really simple and helpful.

Lesley Ward
Senior Research Technology Support Technician, SLS

Katherine Mayfield, Sustainability Champion

TECHNICIANS AND SUSTAINABILITY

The University declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and set ambitious targets for carbon reduction. Our Way to Sustainable Strategy recognises the need to engage with all stakeholders on our journey as every individual has a part to play.

We have worked with Departmental Green Action Teams across the University for a number of years to help them drive sustainability forward in their areas. Through our work with the Chemistry and Life Sciences Green Action Teams, which are strongly supported by technicians, we saw the opportunities and initiatives that they were putting in place to improve lab sustainability.

We became aware that technicians by their very nature are aware of, and knowledgeable of, so many of the processes and systems that take place in their department. As such we have set up the Technicians Sustainability Working Group, which we hope will share best practice, resolve problems, identify improvements and implement action quicker, wider and more holistically across the university.

The Group will address issues such as energy consumption, waste and engagement and as such representatives from the waste and energy management teams will be in regular attendance.

I have enjoyed working with technicians and finding out more about how labs operate and look forward to working with more technicians to help them address sustainability in their areas.

If you are interested in getting involved contact Katherine Mayfield, Sustainability Champion (Katherine.mayfield@warwick.ac.uk).

WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE TECHNICIAN COMMITMENT?

Over the coming months we will be working on elements of the action plan, in particular around recruitment and career development. This will involve formulating ideas around how and where we recruit our technical staff, including some video showcasing of the work of our technicians and the departments that they work in. We will be looking at ways of developing our technical staff, not just through attending courses, but through work-shadowing and placements and also secondments to other roles.

Work will be ongoing to update the TechNet website encouraging Technicians to use this as their 'go to place' for anything relating to the Technician Community. This will include careers advice pages and links to development programmes and job opportunities.

When 'normality' returns we will aim to hold events on campus to update staff on what's happening, to gather ideas for the future and to engage with you on what the Technician Commitment means and how it can make a different to you in the future. Nothing will change without your input.

USEFUL INFORMATION AND HOW TO KEEP UP TO DATE

Ask to sign up for our newsletter and you will be sure never to miss any update on what's happening with Technicians again.

Email us at **technicians@warwick.ac.uk**

View the TechNet website at
warwick.ac.uk/research/technicians

Follow us on Twitter **@TechnetWarwick**

Find our action plan at
Our Technician Commitment (warwick.ac.uk)

FURTHER USEFUL INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND AT

The Technicians Commitment web pages **www.technicians/org.uk**

The Science Council web pages describing the Technician Commitment
www.sciencecouncil.org/employers/technician-commitment/

Warwick's Organisational Development pages with course and career support **warwick.ac.uk/services/ldc/personal**

The Talent website **mitalent.ac.uk**

BBSRC research technical professionals guidelines
www.bbsrc.uksi.org/skills/developing-careers/research-technicians-technology-skills-specialists/

FIND OUT MORE

✉ technicians@warwick.ac.uk

💻 www.warwick.ac.uk/research/technicians

🐦 @TechnetWarwick