

## Technician Commitment: Stage 3 Self-Assessment & Action Plan Guidance

*Please note: This guidance and template is for institutions who have already submitted their Stage One and Two Self-Assessments & Action Plans, 1 and 3 years after becoming an official signatory of the Technician Commitment. This guidance and template refers to the third stage of self-assessment and action planning to be submitted 6 years after the submission of the original submission.*

The Technician Commitment aims to ensure visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability for technicians working in higher education and research, across all disciplines.

The third stage of self-assessment and action planning process asks for reflection on past action plans, evidence of progress and engagement and a further 36 month action plan. The self-assessment includes a 'RAG' analysis of previous action plans - a 'Red, Amber & Green' status report.

The Technician Commitment Steering Board does not seek to dictate how organisations promote a positive culture for the technician community. This is a matter for autonomous institutions and the technician, research and academic community to agree. It is expected that as a minimum, signatories publicly state their Technician Commitment signatory status and institutional action plans on a dedicated and discoverable webpage, along with their named point of contact. The Steering Board asks signatories to evidence that the 'technician voice' is present in the development and formation of institutional action plans. The Technician Commitment is a collaborative endeavour and the Steering Board will support and facilitate the establishment and sharing of best practice demonstrated in the self-assessments and action plans. A vibrant community of Institutional Leads tasked with implementing the Technician Commitment has developed since the Commitment's inception and the Steering Board aims to ensure a range of forums are available to enable peers to share expertise, good practice and experiences.

Cross referencing to other sector institutional reviews relevant to technicians is welcomed; for example, the Steering Board are keen to learn how signatories are advancing equality, diversity and inclusion for the technical community and institutions may wish to reference Athena SWAN and Race Equality Charter submissions. The Steering Board are also keen to learn of Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) submissions and Research Excellence Framework (REF) environment statements where technicians have been explicitly mentioned. The Steering Board are particularly keen to see activity and plans to enact the recommendations of the TALENT Commission embedded in Stage 3 self-assessments and action plans.

The Technician Commitment Steering Board, through the executive team, will choose a limited number of submissions for active review between the institution and the Technician Commitment.

Please note that finalised Action Plans should be signed off at an institutional leadership level (e.g. Vice-Chancellor/President/Director level).

For any additional queries, please contact [techscommit@gatsby.org.uk](mailto:techscommit@gatsby.org.uk)

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

**Organisation: University of Warwick**

**Name of Institutional Lead: Professor David Leadley**

**E-mail: D.R.Leadley@warwick.ac.uk**

**Contact Number: 02476 5 24114**

*Please provide an overview of technical staff structures in your organisation, along with details of any changes to these over the past 6 years in response to the Technician Commitment.*

The University has 270 technicians across the Faculty of Science, Engineering & Medicine, including apprentices. This does not include IT roles or technical roles held within Estates and commercial areas.

Warwick has put in place a senior strategic technical lead for the institution (Director of Research Technology and Technical Strategy) and a Deputy Director of Technical Strategy with a focus on developing talent pipelines. This is in response to the TALENT Commission recommendations. New for 2024, we additionally have a Technical Services Programme Lead for the STEM Grand Challenge, which is a decade long plan to transform and grow science and engineering at Warwick.

Technical resource is overseen by individual departments, which report into an Academic Resource Committee. In each department, the core infrastructure and teaching technical staff have report lines feeding into a Technical Services Manager (TSM). The TSM typically reports into the Departmental Senior Administrative Officer (SAO). Each of our specialist and core facilities has a facility manager, alongside further dedicated technical resource, which report into an academic director or a senior technical member of staff. Where technicians focus on specific research projects, line management is provided by the PI, with more flexible resource line managed by departmental TSM or SAO.

*Please provide an overview of the governance, leadership and reporting lines of the Technician Commitment at your institution, along with details on how it is resourced, and information on how your organisation has engaged with the wider community within and beyond your institution. How has this developed since you became a signatory?*

Our Technician Commitment activity is overseen by a Steering Group, chaired by the Deputy-PVC for Research Infrastructure & Governance. Other members of the group include senior members of HR, TSMs from several departments, the Director of Research Technology and Technical Strategy, and the technical representation from our Research Culture Committee. Meetings of the Steering Group occur every quarter. These feedback directly into the University Executive Board at appropriate

times. The Technician Commitment was also included as part of the refreshed institutional research strategy (Work-Strand 5).

Alongside the Technician Commitment Steering Group, we also have a Technician Commitment Sub-Group that enables more informal discussion with the technician community and generation of bottom-up ideas. The Sub-Group has two-way feedback into the Technician Commitment Steering Group and has a range of technical representatives from across the University, including those in core teams, the management strand, and the specialist strand. Ideas that have been developed by this group, such as the 'Warwick Technician Commitment Award for Outstanding Achievement' have been taken forward and endorsed at an institutional level.

Our activities have a variety of funding streams, appropriate to the work. Funds for institutional events and staffing resource are built into the 5-year plan of the department responsible for Research Technology Platforms (RTPs), with a separate cost code for Technician Commitment activity. Funds for specific projects have been resourced through part of our institutional Research England Research Culture funding, via several competitive calls. Successful examples of technical projects include 'Creating localised and institutional wide forums for RTProfs', 'Creating and supporting shared scientific resources', 'Advancing the visibility, knowledge, and collaborative opportunities for RTProfs' and 'Technician Led Outreach Demonstrators' (total funds £85k). Technical staff have also been funded for projects through the BBSRC and EPSRC IAA schemes.

In addition to this, we have been fortunate to lead the EPSRC funded (~£ 1M) *Warwick Analytical Science Centre (WASC)* with a focus on Research Technical Professionals at Warwick and nationally, plus as Co-Lead on the Research England funded *MI TALENT Programme* (~ £5M) and the *UK Institute for Technical Skills & Strategy (ITSS)*. These projects have enabled widespread engagement with the national technical community, alongside attendance at Technician Commitment Signatory events. We have also encouraged engagement with established networks such as Technical Managers in Universities (TMU) and through input to the creation of the UK Technology Specialists Network (TSN).

*Please provide a RAG analysis on your institutional 36-month action plan indicating which activities you have undertaken and completed (green), which are in progress (amber) and which are still to be carried out (red). Please provide an explanation for those categorised as red.*

*This may be detailed here or attached to this document as an appendix.*

Please see the attached spreadsheet. As a living document, this acts as our on-going action plan which incorporates additional activities added since our stage 2 report.

*Please provide evidence that your previous action plans are having impact. (For example, you may wish to provide links to initiatives, websites, testimonials, articles/blogs).*

Warwick has made significant impact with work related to the Technician Commitment action plan across a range of areas and activities.

We have had considerable engagement with UKRI, via WASC and through collaboration with TALENT and now ITSS. Working in partnership with UKRI to change their eligibility requirements has opened up a wide range of opportunities for technical staff. At Warwick, five technical staff have successfully led major proposals for UKRI funding from EPSRC (2), BBSRC and MRC (2). Many more technical staff have been included as Co-I or named on grants. We are proud of these achievements, which have been facilitated by the support we have been able to offer through our Research & Impact Services (RIS), from the academic community, our senior leaders and the Technician Commitment Steering Group. The work with UKRI has also seen our technicians take positions on Strategic Advisory Teams, sit on panels for proposal review, and provide input to consultations on the Research Excellence Framework (REF). Representation on the EPSRC SAT was instrumental in promoting the recent funding call from EPSRC in support of EPS technical professionals.

We are also proud to launch the Technical Specialist Promotional Pathway Pilot, only the second of its kind in the sector. This framework will enable technical specialists to progress their careers based on their own merit, providing recognition for excelling in a role whilst remaining a specialist. By using a modified version of the criteria used for the Academic Progression and Promotional Framework, we intend to establish parity between technical specialist and academic research career tracks. The first cohort will find out outcomes in the summer of 2024, and we hope to re-engage with all stakeholders to refine the process and criteria following the completion of the first cohort.

We have assessed which of our institutional committees have technical representation and which of those without would benefit from representation to ensure the technical voice input is considered in decision making. This has led to technical staff being added to our institutional Research Committee and Research Culture Committee, as well as the longstanding technical staff representation on Health & Safety and buildings committees.

Warwick has put in place an institutional strategic technical lead, the *Director of Research Technology and Technical Strategy*. This post is supported by a *Deputy Director of Technical Strategy*, with a focus on developing the technical talent pipeline. These posts will ensure a strategic approach to succession planning and the structure of our technical resources, and helped implement the Technical Specialist Promotional Pathway. Additionally, with our investment in our STEM Grand Challenge (GC) we have created a new senior post, the *Technical Services Programme Lead (STEM Grand Challenge)*. The postholder will lead on the technical needs of research and teaching and also shape the structure of our technical resource across our Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine to meet the needs of significant growth.

Our technical talent pipeline is vitally important to meeting our research and teaching needs. Warwick Manufacturing Group (WMG) has a successful apprenticeship pipeline which typically has an annual cohort of four apprentices. This is now overseen by a dedicated manager, who began their career at Warwick as an apprentice. Alongside this, WMG have hosted their first intake of T Level students. The learnings from the apprenticeship pipeline and hosting of T Level students in WMG will be rolled out across the wider campus as part of our 36-month action plan.

Technical staff are also encouraged to engage in outreach activities. Several technical staff are Warwick Institute of Engagement (WIE) Fellows, and have hosted training sessions on outreach for Technical staff through TALENT. Technical staff have developed and delivered sections of our Christmas Lectures alongside our outreach teams. Technical staff also led a bid to our institutional Research England Research Culture Fund to provide funds for technical staff to themselves design and create outreach demonstrator units to showcase technical careers. These have been highly successful, with units ranging across virtual reality electron microscopy suites, laser systems, and

tornado simulators. One unit was used at the Big Bang Fair to explain how infrared spectroscopy works using a guitar, with thousands of school age children engaging with the stand over the course of the event.

To recognise and celebrate our technical staff we launched our [Warwick Technician Commitment Award for Outstanding Achievement](#) in 2023, following suggestions from our Technician Commitment Sub-Group. The winners have received bespoke trophies designed and built by our technical apprentices, which are awarded at institution-wide technical events. These technical events have acted as a key forum for updating our technical community on Technician Commitment progress, to listen to the needs and ideas from our staff, and to showcase technical work across campus. We created a video series [Our Technical Talent](#), which gives an insight into the work and careers of eight technical staff at different career stages and in varied roles. As part of the series, interviews with a Deputy PVC, Heads of Department, Directors of Administration, academics, and sustainability champions provide an insight of how valuable technical input is in enabling the world class teaching and research at Warwick, and how the technical community interacts with other roles. This was rolled out over a two-month period, with links to the videos circulated in the Warwick Insite emails to every member of staff, with close to 3000 views. Visibility of our Technician Commitment has been highlighted through a regularly [updated brochure](#), with the latest iteration launched in July 2023. This gives details of progress, opportunities, and case studies of technical careers.

*Please provide details of how your institution is enacting the recommendations of the TALENT Commission (<https://www.mitalent.ac.uk/theTALENTcommission>).*

Alongside our Midlands Innovation partners, Warwick has committed to [10 action points](#) as a joint response to the TALENT Commission. We have worked both independently and collaboratively with our MI partners to enact positive change.

We have implemented several of these action points to date, for example:

*2) We will enable opportunities for technical staff to be considered as coinvestigators, co-supervisors, for grants or projects and provide transparent guidelines for how technical staff can be costed on to proposals. Where appropriate, we will encourage technical staff to be PIs on proposals, with the same levels of support for writing and navigating processes as available to researchers. We will encourage appropriate inclusion of technical staff as authors, co-authors, or contributors on published papers and presentations, providing clear guidance for appropriate inclusion at relevant stages.*

We have had five technical members of staff successfully lead major proposals for UKRI funding, with many more as Co-Is on our proposals, as mentioned above. To enable this, we have provided internal support to technical staff both to develop bids and also to raise awareness of the opportunities, as well as using the excellent training resources provided through TALENT and WASC. We have also raised awareness and visibility of how this was achieved to the wider sector through forums such as the International Research Culture Conference held in Warwick, TSN, TALENT and WASC. We have had a fair attribution policy published on our TechNet webpages since our first stage action plan. This has supported technical staff in obtaining the recognition for their input into research.

*5) We will take a strategic approach to the sustainability of technical skills and careers, and appropriate succession planning through horizon scanning and identifying current and potential future skills gaps. All of our universities will appoint an institutional strategic lead from a technical background to lead this agenda.*

We have put in place new roles to take a strategic lead, the *Director of Research Technology and Technical Strategy*. This post is supported by a 0.3 FTE post, *Deputy Director of Technical Strategy*, with a focus on developing the technical talent pipeline. These posts will ensure a strategic approach to succession planning and the structure of our technical resources. Furthermore, we have established a *Technical Director of Research Computing* as a senior strategic role, held by a technical specialist, to oversee the future technical and staff resources that will be needed by the institution in this area.

*7) We will develop and pilot new opportunities for progression via Technical Specialist pathways, and opportunities and mechanisms for staff to move across career pathways and job families. We will ensure provision and protected time for training and professional development and support technical staff to take advantage of development opportunities, such as technical training, placements, and professional registration. We will ensure inclusion of technical staff within end-to-end recruitment processes when hiring for technical roles and visibility of clearly defined career pathways and job descriptions for technical roles and careers.*

In 2021, we rolled out our technician job family, with a career pathway that has generic role descriptions which indicate example tasks and knowledge, skills and experience expectations at each level. Other professional services within the institution are now looking at this example to form their own job families. Through TALENT, WASC and internal schemes, we have provided excellent opportunities for career development and training to our technical community.

We implemented our Technical Specialist Promotional Pathway Pilot for 23/24. This framework will enable technical specialists to progress based on their own merit against a modified version of the four criteria used for the Academic Progression and Promotional Framework, providing recognition for excelling in a role whilst remaining a specialist.

Our 36 month action plan is designed around the [10 action points](#) committed to with our MI peers in response to the TALENT Commission, which will ensure that we continue to make progress in enhancing the careers of technical staff.

*Please provide a 36-month action plan; detailing plans to ensure your organisation continues to address the themes of the Technician Commitment and details of how impact will be evidenced and initiatives resourced: (this may be detailed here or attached to this document as an appendix). Please evidence how the 'technician voice' was present in the development and formation of the 36-month action plan.*

Please see the attached spreadsheet. This living document has been developed with significant input from our technical community, through engagement with the Technician Commitment Steering Group, the Technician Commitment Steering Sub-Group, focus groups, feedback sessions at Technician Commitment events and direct feedback to members of the Steering Group.

*Please confirm that your Technician Commitment status and 3-year action plan is published on your organisation's website and provide the relevant URL here:*

The University of Warwick website includes a section for our Technician Commitment at [Our Technician Commitment \(warwick.ac.uk\)](https://www.warwick.ac.uk/our-technician-commitment) where the action plan is published, and updated in real time.



Signed.....(Technician Commitment Nominated Institutional Lead)

Prof. David Leadley, Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research

Date: 17/01/2024



Signed.....(Technician Commitment Signatory – Leader of Institution)

Professor Stuart Croft, Vice Chancellor and President

Date: 22/01/2024