

## 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 themes of the Technician Commitment are: Visibility, Recognition, Career Development, Sustainability and Evaluating Impact. The fifth theme of Evaluating Impact takes the form of a self-assessment process, to be undertaken one year after an organisation becomes a signatory and biennially thereafter.

The self-assessment process enables the Technician Commitment Steering Group to gain an understanding of the position of each signatory organisation and the measures to be put in place to ensure that signatories are making progress against the themes outlined in the Commitment. The self-assessment process asks for contextual information, progress to date and a detailed 24-month future action plan.

The Technician Commitment Steering Group 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 plan on a dedicated and discoverable webpage, along with their named point of contact. The Steering Group would like 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 Group 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 is emerging and the Steering Group aims to ensure a range of forums are available to enable peers to share expertise, good practice and experiences.

To support institutional action planning, please see Appendix A for examples of activities and initiatives that have been successfully implemented in a range of universities and research institutes. Additional details are available on the Technician Commitment's dedicated online resource, available at <http://technicians.org.uk/techniciancommitment/>. Cross referencing to other sector institutional reviews relevant to technicians is welcomed; for example, institutions may wish to reference Athena SWAN applications, Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) submissions and Research Excellence Framework (REF) environment statements where technicians have been explicitly mentioned.

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 [k.verre@sciencecouncil.org](mailto:k.verre@sciencecouncil.org) or [tracey.dickens@gatsby.org.uk](mailto:tracey.dickens@gatsby.org.uk).

# Technician Commitment

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

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### ***University of Bristol Technical Profile***

The University of Bristol's roots date back to 1876. Since its formation it has become one of the leading institutions among the UK's Russell Group of universities and operates globally, where it is recognised for its research and academic excellence.

The University has a strong interdisciplinary approach and regularly features among the top ranking institutions in global league tables.

The University of Bristol's mission is 'to pursue and share knowledge and understanding, both for their own sake and to help individuals and society fulfil their potential'. This is underpinned by a vision where the University of Bristol is an international powerhouse of learning, discovery and enterprise, whose excellence is acknowledged locally, nationally and globally.

Key to Bristol's vision is a clear and consistent articulation of and dialogue with its many stakeholder and publics about the wide range of research carried out at the Institution and hence is often featured in many national and international media. It has a proud history of two way dialogue as part of its research activities and addresses the world's key challenges through an interdisciplinary approach.

The University also plays a lead role in the city of Bristol's cultural and economic well being and carries out an extensive programme of events and activities on behalf of the city, as well as being a keen supporter of partner organisations' activities.

The University currently has c. 21,500 students supported by c.6000 staff of which c.420 (7%) are technical staff who are directly engaged in supporting learning and research activities.

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

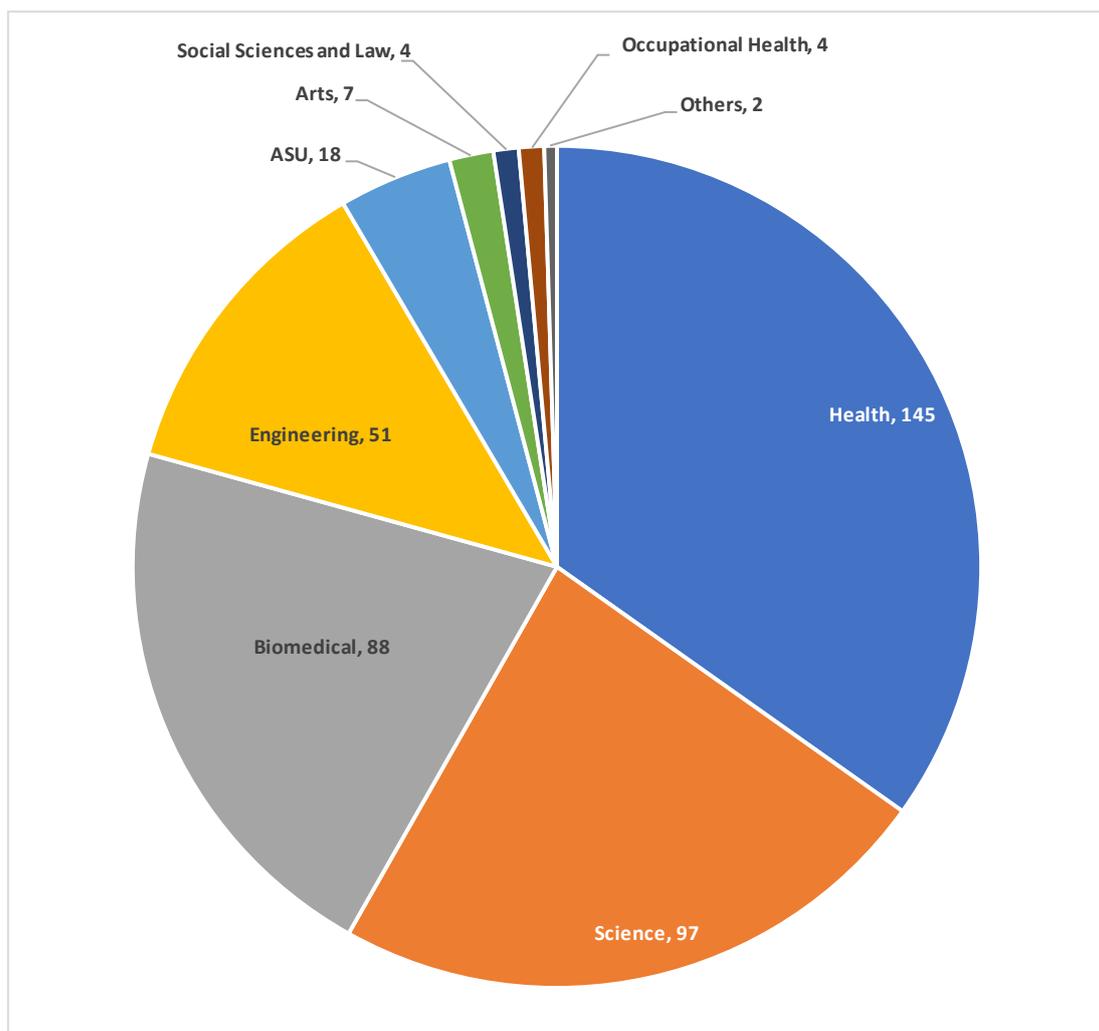
Our technical staff are identified in a distinct 'job family' within Professional Services. Most of our technical staff are directly supporting the core business of delivering excellent teaching and research. The term 'technical staff' is used to describe one of the most varied and wide-ranging employee groups in the organisation. Technical staff exist right across the grade structures, and the variety of technical skills and range of professional expertise is wide, covering semi-skilled, skilled, academic and

expert level staff. Technical staff are both core and grant funded, and roles range across research, teaching, facilities, stores, workshops and specialist roles.

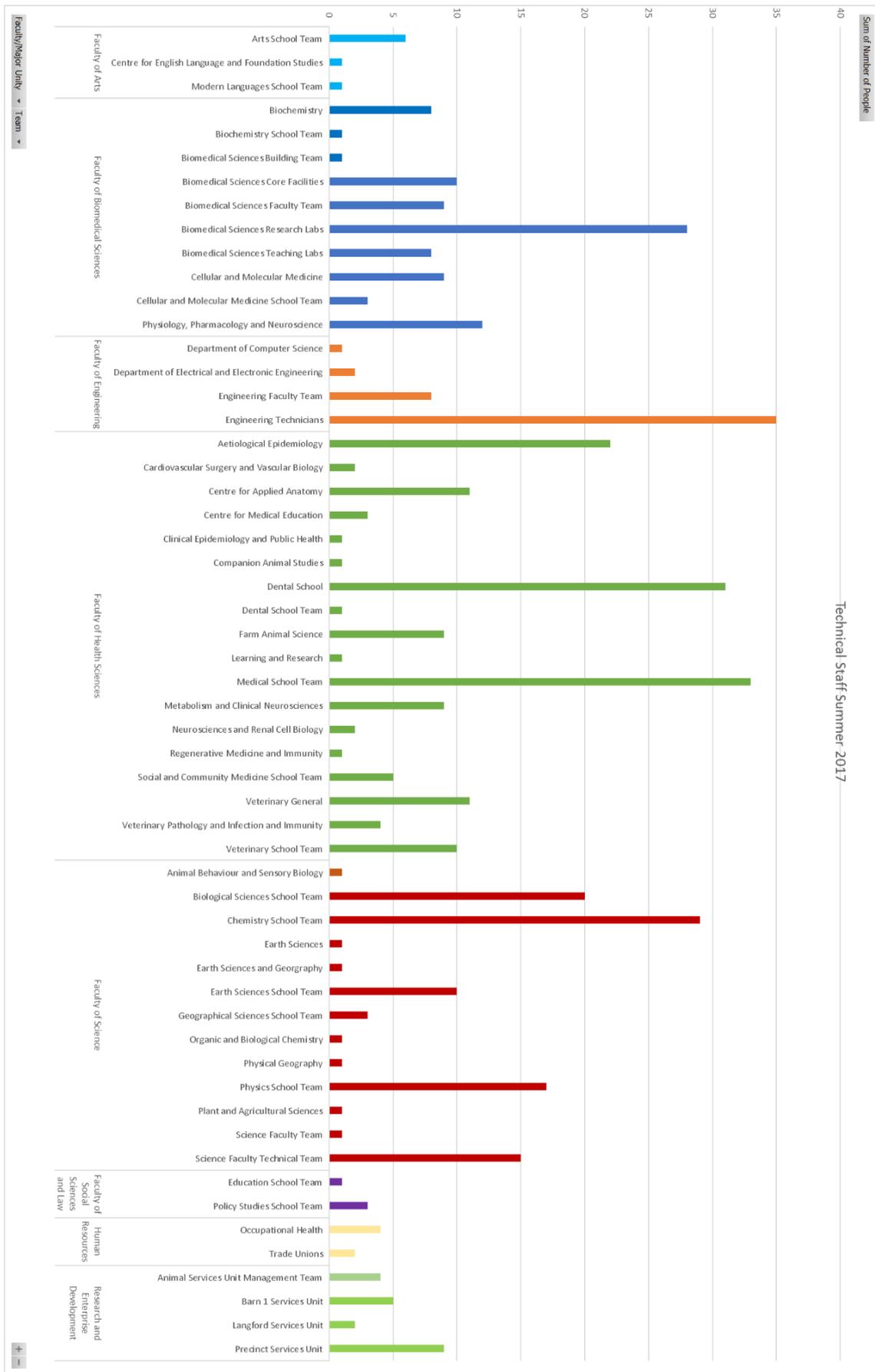
The members of technical staff who are included within the remit of this commitment are defined as those who are engaged directly in supporting academic related work, i.e. teaching and research. These are primarily the technical staff based in the Faculties rather than those in the Divisions (i.e. IT Services, Estates) engaged in other support activities.

*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 c.420 technical staff covered by the commitment at Bristol. Fig. 1 shows the distribution by Faculty or Service. Our Technical Staff are geographically spread over many sites in Bristol (including at various Hospital locations) as well as at our second Campus at Langford in Somerset.



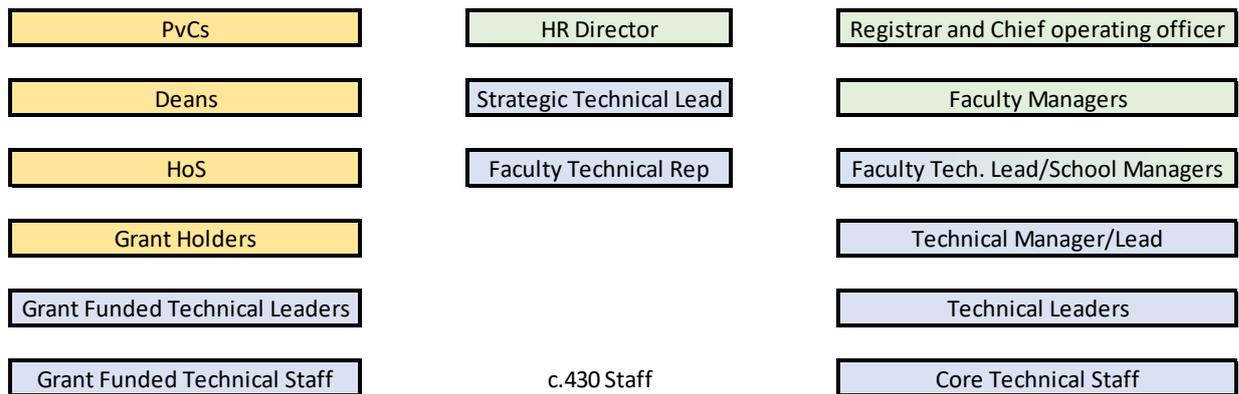
**Fig 1 – Faculty/Service distribution of technical staff (by people – Autumn 2017)**



**Fig 2 – School/Dept. distribution of technical staff (by people – Autumn 2017)**

The Technical support needs in our Faculties and Schools reflect the nature of the activities undertaken and range from those that require divisional technical support only (i.e. from IT Services and Estates) to complex large embedded technical services such as those in Health Sciences, Science, Biomedical Sciences and Engineering. The Arts and Social Sciences and Law Faculties do have essential and specific technical needs/ technical staff, but the relatively smaller scale means that commonly the technical leadership responsibilities are carried out by non-technical professional services staff (e.g. Faculty and School Managers).

The following diagrams more accurately represent typical larger scale technical structures.



**Fig. 3 Typical Technical Structure for high technical support Faculty**

#### Line Management

- Line management of core funded technicians is through the Faculty Managers
- Line management of grant funded technicians is through the Grant Holder
- Technical managers have a matrix (associate) management role for all technicians (core and grant funded) to include pastoral care, career development, staff review, communications and application of core processes

## University of Bristol actions prior to signing commitment:

Prior to declaring and signing the Technician Commitment Bristol had developed a university wide Technical Strategy. The pillars of the strategy are:

- Leadership
- People
- Faculties and Resources

A further activity resulting from the Technical Strategy was the creation of a new Technical Career Framework working group with a remit to develop a new career framework covering all teaching and research focussed technical roles at the University.

We had established a Technical Managers group that came together to:

- lobby for support and recognition
- develop, articulate and share good practice
- act as a conduit for communications to the wider technical staff body
- solve common issues
- engage with sector and UK policy representative groups and initiatives
- act as a focal point for relevant university projects and activities
- promote skills development for staff
- establish new technical apprenticeships
- establish an annual all Technical Staff conference

## University of Bristol activities since signing the Technician Commitment

### Visibility actions:

- Appointment of a University wide Strategic Technical Lead (STL) – the STL acts a clearer focus for 2-way communications (and influence) into university planning, actions and initiatives. The STL engages at all levels in the organisation, from individual interactions, technical teams, larger teams, Faculty Managers, the Divisions and the University Senior Management Team.
- The Technical Strategy implementation has supported greater representation on decision making groups.
- The University has a new Technical Leaders Group with greater representation from reflecting the whole technical body. These Technical Leaders are more proactive and much more identifiable as key stakeholders in change and improvement activities as well as in influential working groups.
- Celebrating Technical Careers through case study videos produced with/by our apprentices, to raise the profile and inspire others to pursue technical careers. These videos will be used for careers activities, provided to schools, colleges and community groups; as well as shared via web and social media channels.
- Participation in new staff induction events (for all new staff at Bristol).
- Creation and publication of a 'Technical Matters' newsletter, that goes to all technical staff, Faculty Managers and Deans of Faculty (at their request).

### Recognition actions:

- CREATE – our framework for teaching excellence previously only available to academic teaching staff is being piloted with a cohort of technical staff (who carry out the requisite amount of teaching). Will result in HEA (professional) accreditation as well as recognising teaching competence in those who successfully complete the programme.
- The university are now 'working towards' Employer Champion status – with the support of the Science Council we are working with a cohort of technical staff as they seek professional recognition. This group will be feeding back experience to our technical leaders group to inform our future recognition strategy
- We have included professional recognition as 'desirable' in the SKE section on all new technical job roles
- Technical Leaders are increasingly engaged in sustainability through engagement in decision making in Faculties and Schools. We are making progress with associate management for grant funded technical staff. and in managing careers and succession for all.
- Technical Expertise, new roles created to reflect technical specialists and expert careers as part of the technical job family and in the technical career framework

### Career Development actions:

- Bristol is a pioneer in establishing a clear and consistent career framework with technical roles identified at all levels in the organisational structure. All new technical roles are aligned to our technical career framework, and all new roles are approved by a relevant technical leader
- Our technical career framework identifies pathways to technical specialist/experts as well as for technical managers and leaders
- Our technical career pathways clarify and identify the role types to inform individual career planning
- Our bespoke technical manager training activities continue to develop skills around managing careers and succession planning

### Sustainability actions:

- We have delivered some focussed training on people and skills resource planning and on building effective business cases for technical; linked to local/organisational plans and objectives
- We have started engaging with the local community to raise the awareness of technical careers at Bristol, including Apprenticeships (apprenticeships at Bristol videos)
- We have initiated some work to ensure the University Planning Processes fully embed Technical Support planning
- We provide central support, advice and guidance for Technical Apprenticeships throughout the process, from assessing the need through to selection and recruitment, training of local supervisors, induction, completion, celebration and final placement or exit support
- We are identifying potential future leaders in the technical family and providing opportunities to develop (e.g. Organising Technical Conferences, working on best practice guides with other stakeholders, mentoring, outreach)
- We are developing good practice guides, tools and processes for reporting and analysis of technical job family demographics to support succession planning and recruitment

- We are developing a good practice guide to developing staff, including personal career planning, secondments, professional registration, CPD and technical skills development, placements, projects, and continuous improvement activities
- We are supporting the national work around HE Apprenticeship HE Trailblazer Consortium and specific HE technician apprentice standards

#### Evaluating Impact actions:

- We are reviewing all new Technical Career Framework job roles through a specific reward panel to ensure compliance and review effectiveness
- We are reviewing the Professional Registration process with our pilot cohort
- We are reviewing our technical teaching CREATE programme with our pilot cohort
- We are reviewing technical staff feedback in our full staff survey (as a specific staff grouping)
- We regularly review technical strategy implementation with the University Faculty Managers Group
- The Strategic Technical Leaders Group regularly review the effectiveness and implementation of the overall technical strategy
- The Technical Leaders Group regularly review and feedback on local technical strategy implementation
- The PvC Research and the Strategic Technical Lead regularly meet to review the implementation of the strategy
- The Director of Human Resources and the Strategic Technical Lead regularly meet to review the implementation of the strategy

## University of Bristol 24-month action plan

Theme	Example Activities (24-month action plan)
<p><b>Visibility</b></p> <p>Ensure that technicians within the organisation are identifiable and that the contribution of technicians is visible within and beyond the institution</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Institutional Strategic Technical Lead provides a clear point of access and representation in university planning and decision making where technical considerations need to be made</li> <li>• Maintain our database of all staff in our technical job family; ensuring all technical job family staff have clear and appropriate line management (whether professional services or academic; and all technical staff have a direct or clearly identified associate technical manager</li> <li>• Ensuring all of our technical leaders are identified and included in technical planning and communications activities at the appropriate level of responsibility</li> <li>• Supporting and Enabling Technical Staff outreach, volunteering and community engagement activities</li> <li>• All new technical staff roles will use the clearly identifiable and consistent generic+ job descriptions and job titles provided and maintained as part of our Technical Career Framework</li> <li>• All staff in the technical job family are invited to the annual technical staff conference</li> <li>• All staff in the technical job family are invited to participate in training and development focussed on technical staff needs</li> <li>• Develop and implement actions to ensure technical staff are identified and appropriately provisioned for on grants and in other existing and new activities where technical support is needed</li> <li>• Develop the Technical Staff web portal</li> <li>• Develop internal marketing and public engagement materials such as our Technical apprenticeship videos</li> <li>• Continue to develop out 'Technical Matters' electronic newsletter, which included celebrating technical staff/team successes</li> <li>• Ensure and maintain representation at Senior Management, Faculty, School/Service level as well as on major projects, as described in our Technical Strategy (approved recommendations)</li> <li>• Continue to include technical staff in the Professional Services excellence awards and to have specific awards for technicians and technical teams</li> <li>• Ensure the Technical Strategy is reflected in the overall organisation strategy</li> <li>• Maintain and further develop our technical leaders group</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recognition</b></p> <p>Support technicians to gain recognition through professional registration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisation communicates the opportunity to become professionally registered to technical staff. We will share the experiences of our pilot technical staff group</li> <li>• Conferment of the organisational level Science Council Employer Champion award in recognition of the support given to technical staff to gain professional registration and engage in continued professional development</li> <li>• Evaluate and review the effectiveness and suitability of our teaching excellence programme (CREATE) with our pilot cohort of technical teaching staff and the CREATE programme team. This programme is Higher Education Academy accredited</li> <li>• Continue to include technical staff in the Professional Services excellence awards and to have specific awards for technicians and technical teams</li> <li>• Develop protocols for consistently recognising appropriate technical staff contributions in published research outputs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Career Development</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bristol is a pioneer in establishing a clear and consistent career framework with technical roles identified at all levels in the organisational structure. All new technical roles are aligned to our</li> </ul>

<p>Enable career progression opportunities for technicians through the provision of clear, documented career pathways</p>	<p>technical career framework, and all new roles are approved by a relevant technical leader</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our technical career framework identifies pathways to technical specialist/experts as well as for technical managers and leaders</li> <li>• Our technical career pathways clarify and identify the role types to inform individual career planning</li> <li>• Our technical career framework is aligned to professional recognition</li> <li>• Out dedicated technical web pages provide a range of career and development resources</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sustainability</b></p> <p>Ensure the future sustainability of technical skills across the organisation and that technical expertise is fully utilised</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiation of a 'shared facilities' working group to look at defining good practice in the support and access to shared research and teaching facilities, including the managed costing and funding of appropriate technical support</li> <li>• Resource Planning and Business Case skills for technical managers and leaders to support appropriate levels of technical support, linked to organisational plans and objectives</li> <li>• Engagement with the local community to raise the awareness of technical careers at Bristol, including Apprenticeships</li> <li>• Working with the University Planning Processes to fully embed Technical Support planning</li> <li>• Central support, advice and guidance for Technical Apprenticeships throughout the process, from assessing the need through to selection and recruitment, training of local supervisors, induction, completion, celebration and final placement or exit support</li> <li>• Identification of these with leadership potential in the technical family and providing opportunities to develop (e.g. Organising Technical Conferences, working on best practice guides with other stakeholders, mentoring, outreach)</li> <li>• Develop good practice guide, tools and processes for reporting and analysis of technical job family demographics to support succession planning and recruitment</li> <li>• Develop the technical good practice guide to developing staff, including personal career planning, secondments, professional registration, CPD and technical skills development, placements, projects, and continuous improvement activities</li> <li>• Continue supporting the national work around HE Apprenticeship HE Trailblazer Consortium and specific HE technician apprentice standards</li> <li>• Promote and communicate technical career opportunities to graduates, post-graduates and academics as a career choice</li> </ul>



Signed:

(Technician Commitment Nominated Institutional Lead)

Date: 03.07.18



Signed:

(Technician Commitment Signatory – Leader of Institution)

Date: 03.07.18