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UNIVERSITY
OF SUSSEX

Technician Commitment



University of Sussex
Technician Commitment
Stage 2 Report

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Preface

The University of Sussex is a proud supporter of the Technician Commitment and has developed this initiative at Sussex internally and collaboratively between other organisations and technician networks. There is very real positive change happening here for technicians and we are just at the beginning of our planned work. This document sets out what we have achieved, what has worked well, and what has not worked as well, and sets out our plans for the next three years of our Technician Commitment journey.

The University of Sussex is a research intensive university and understands that a large portion of the research undertaken on the campus is strengthened by, and, arguably, only achievable with, the hard work, dedication, and specialist skills and experience of our technicians. Within Sussex's Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) submission, technicians and technical skills are highlighted.

With the appointment of an Associate Director of Technical Operations, the move to a faculty structure, and the appointment of the Director of Faculty Professional and Technical Services, the University ensures that technicians have a voice in the University Leadership Forum and connection to the wider Faculty based Professional Services teams.

This Stage 2 Technician Commitment Report:

The 36 Month Action Plan:

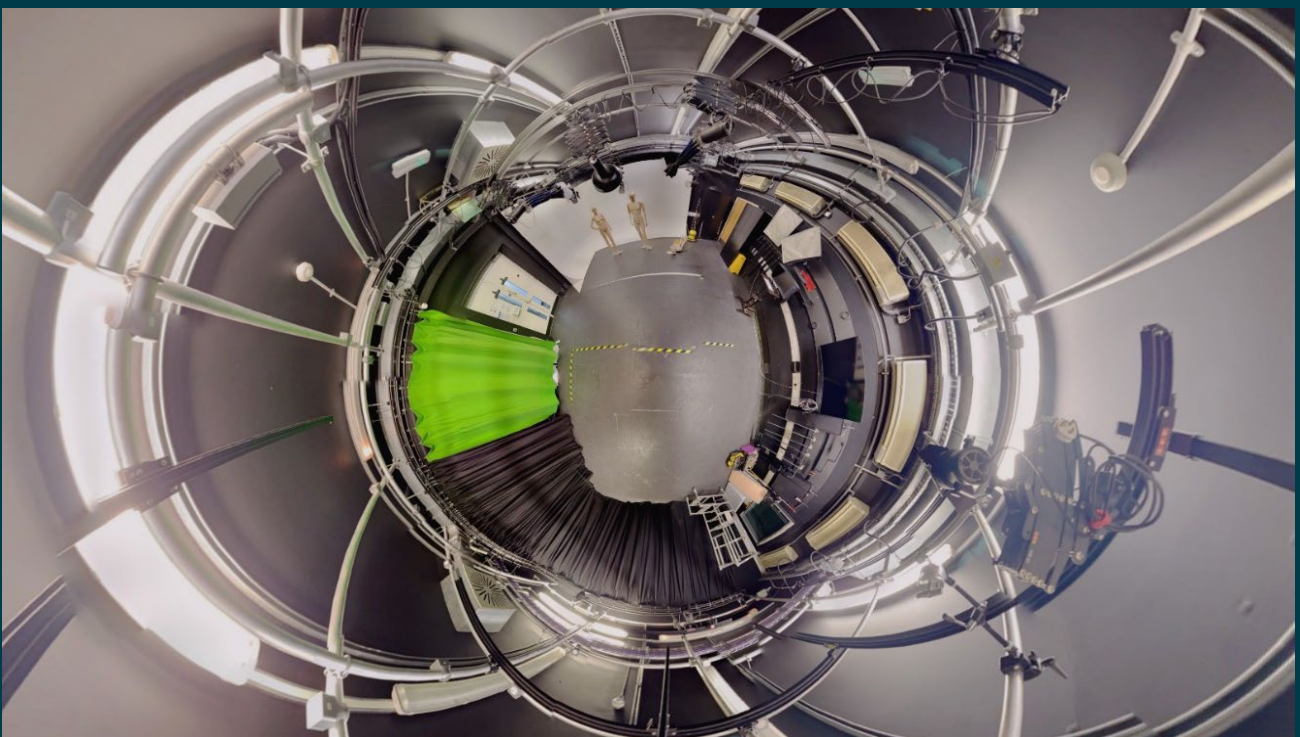


Photo Credit Daniel Hall, Senior Technician Demonstrator (Film & Video), as part of the 2023 Tech Photo Competition

1. Technical Structures at the University of Sussex

There are c. 150 technical staff employed by the University of Sussex. This is an increase since our Stage 1 Self-Assessment, from 126, due in part to some growth of technical teams, but also following the inclusion of technical staff previously on casual contracts but now given open-ended contracts. Technicians support a diverse array of areas across seven schools, within three out of the four (soon to be implemented) Faculties of the University of Sussex (Current structure schematic in **Figure 1**).

There are 93 core funded University technicians, 24 facility technicians and 25 research funded technicians. The range of expertise and skill base is reflected in the breadth of grades technicians fill, from Grade 3 to Grade 9 encompassing basic core support through to highly skilled bespoke “Scientific Officer” type functions. These include subjects of biology, biochemistry, neuroscience, genome damage and stability, psychology, chemistry, physics, geography, ecology, engineering, informatics, anatomy, health and safety, digital media, photography, video, sound, music, drama and productions.

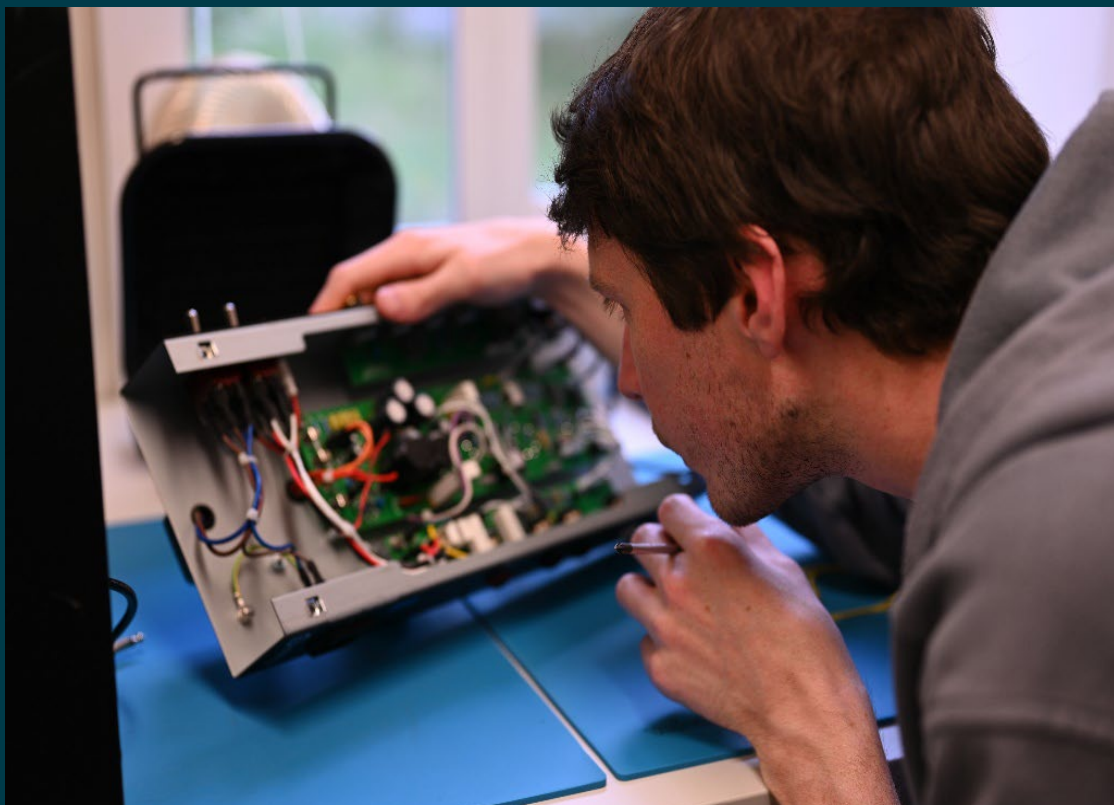


Photo Credit Niks Gjeortz, Senior Technician Demonstrator (Sound & Drama), as part of the 2023 Tech Photo Competition

University of Sussex Technician Structure

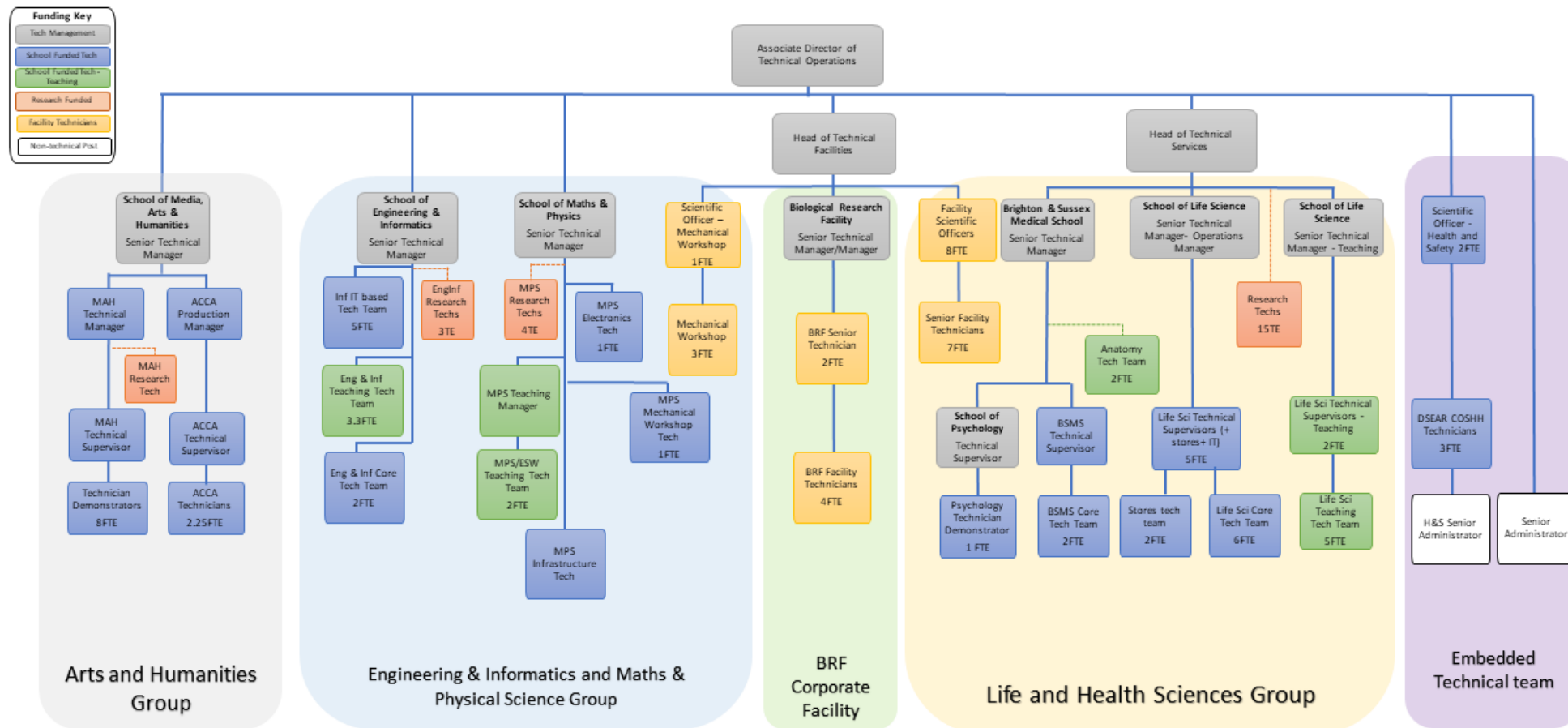


Figure 1. An overview of the Technical Services structure across the University of Sussex

1.1 Technical Review

In 2022, The University of Sussex undertook a Technical Review as part of a university wide review process called 'Size and Shape', as well as signing up to the Technician Commitment. The University went into the review process with the objectives to;

- ensure an effective, efficient and flexible technical service is in place in support of research and teaching
- ensure the new structure(s) provides a value for money services
- bring a consistent and equitable approach to job descriptions, roles, responsibilities and grades across all schools
- establish clear paths and opportunities for development of technical staff
- raise the profile of professional technicians

The review was an exhaustive process which went through multiple governance stages. Technicians had input into the process, and we took on board feedback and adapted plans based on both in-person meetings and anonymous surveys. The following successes were realised upon its completion.

- Assessed technical services required by schools (with workshops inviting technicians and academics), adjusting teams to accommodate and outlining the services we support.
- Assessed skills and responsibilities of technical staff via the National Technician Development Centre (NTDC) survey process, identifying gaps and implementing training recommended by final NTDC report.
- Ensured technical staff had at least one line manager who is a technical member of staff, with line management of all technicians eventually linking up to the Associate Director of Technical Operations.
- Job descriptions were reviewed, re-written and re-scored to be consistent for level of responsibility and grade, as part of the University Job Families program. Two key technician pathways were established with the new job descriptions fitting into them, bringing consistency across the University and technicians regarding job role titles. Job descriptions were re-written and graded based on the HERA system. Job descriptions within pathways were aligned with other institutes, such as the University of Warwick and the University of Reading. This led to all the Grade 2 roles being re-graded to Grade 3 roles. There were a total of 17 instances where technicians moved to a higher grade through the process of moving to the new job descriptions and changes to structures.
- Created Career Pathways for technicians between 'Core/Managerial' and 'Specialist' technical career routes, with job descriptions matching each grade on those pathways (Career Pathways outlined in **Appendix 1**)

Throughout the Technical Review the technician voice was sought to input into the process. This included 'Town Hall' meetings during planning and prior to implementation, the NTDC skills and responsibilities survey,

and technical representation on the Steering Group of the Review. Also, Unions which have members who are technicians were updated on proposed changes throughout the process and prior to any town hall meetings. There was a period of consultation with an online survey staff could complete as well as raise issues in the open meetings. Comments were taken and plans adjusted accordingly (see **Appendix 2** for example of comments and actions taken).

During the implementation phase of the review 17 technical staff were promoted to a higher grade, due to moving to the new technical job descriptions and internal technicians given the chance to apply for new positions where available (and the subsequent upward cascade of roles being filled internally). Furthermore, technicians on casual/zero-hour contracts were given part time flexible contracts, which helped us retain trained key personnel for specialist areas whilst giving staff certainty of FTE and flexibility in their working patterns.

1.2 Technical Structures since the Technical Review

1.2.1 Faculties

Since the Technical Review, the University has taken the strategic decision to move to a four faculty based structure. This means most technicians will be within the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine from August 2024, with ~20 technicians in the Faculty of Media, Arts and Humanities and the Attenborough Centre for the Creative Arts (ACCA), which is currently part of the central department of Communications, Marketing and Advancement.

The role that leads the Technical Teams across the University of Sussex is the Associate Director of Technical Operations, who has worked and developed in technical roles through the University of Sussex and has built and developed invaluable relationships across the university and sector. This role advocates for technicians of all grades and reports into the Director of Faculty Professional and Technical Services, who sits on the Professional Services Leadership Team (PSLT). Both the associate Director and Director are part of the Upper Leadership Forum, thereby strengthening the link from technicians to senior management and, hopefully, increasing the technician voice at this level.

In the last year a Science H&S and compliance technical team has been created and embedded into the science schools to support positive change in school safety processes and create more development opportunities for our technical staff.

1.2.2 Technical Facilities

Following the review, it was also identified there was a lack of consistency in processes of technical facilities across the sciences. Hence, a Head of Technical Facilities role was created and advertised internally, allowing promotion of existing technical staff for this role and the subsequent roles made available due to the moves. This has allowed for all facilities technicians to have direct line management to a Head of role, who is responsible for ensuring alignment in costing, recharging, booking system use, enhancing external facility use, as well as facility technical staff development and training.

Furthermore, specialist creative technicians who support internal and external events and productions in our acclaimed Attenborough Centre for Creative Arts (ACCA) have been appointed to suitable contracts to ensure flexibility and job security. These technicians have adaptability to be able to go on tour, where they continuously develop and grow their skills, while still having the stability of a permanent contract, and allowing us to have very highly skilled and experienced technicians for our events.



Photo Credit Andrew Lloyd, Prep-Room Technician, as part of the 2023 Tech Photo Competition

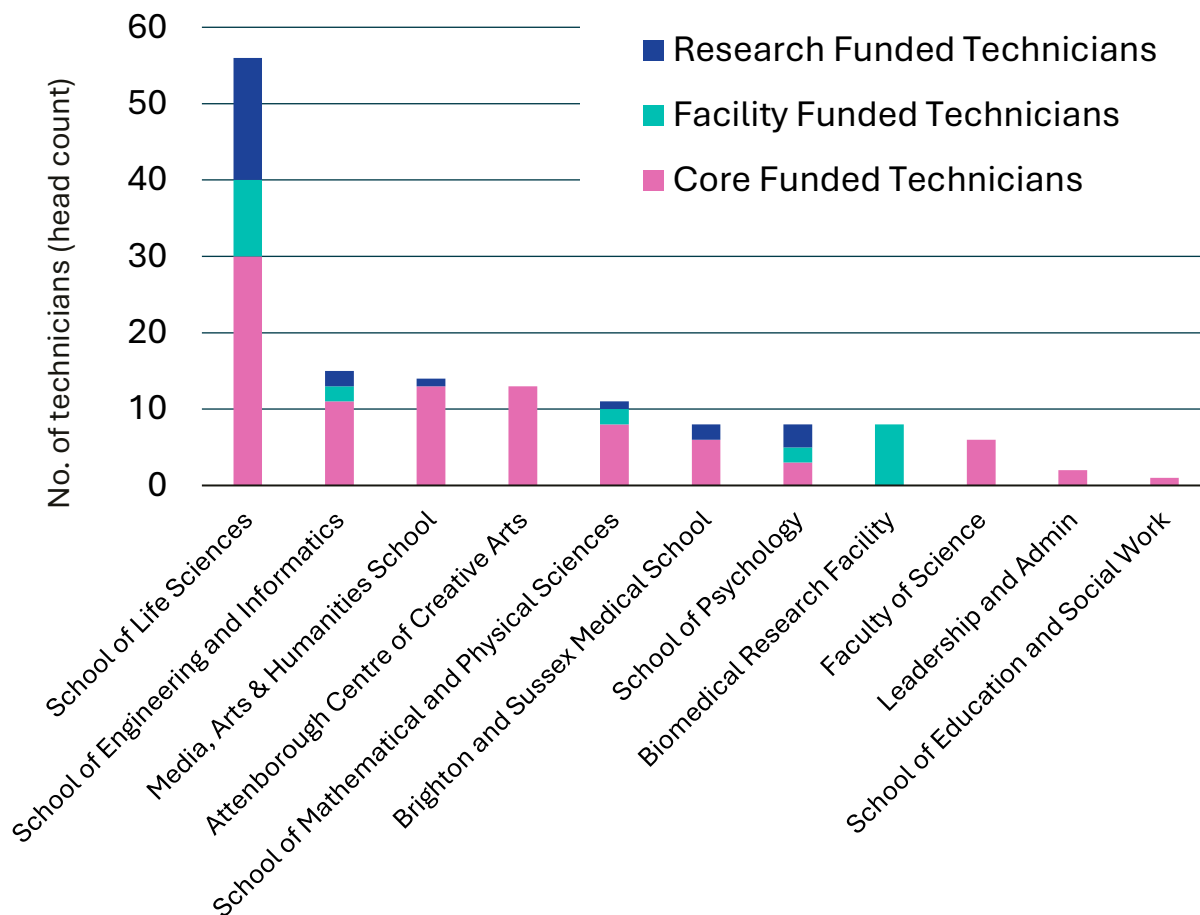


Figure 2. The number of technicians (head count, not FTE) across the current school structures, and their funding source (Core = from a school budget, Facility = Underwritten by a school budget but at least some cost recovery from grants or internal use, Research = funded fully from a research grant)

1.3 Wider technical teams and our Commitment

As the Technician Commitment work at Sussex continues, we have discussed with the London & South East Technician Commitment Leads Group the classification of what other roles in the University we include in the Action Plan scope. In addition, various discussions, including the NTDC, have named other staff groups such as IT, Library Staff and Postgraduate Researchers. However, when discussing and highlighting these options with our Steering Group and technicians, it was clearly communicated that the focus should stay on enabling change for a main group first before expanding.

1.4 EDI and Technical Services

Each school has their own EDI committee, with technical representatives on all of these where technicians are present in the school. We have recently created a Technical Services EDI committee as well to bring technical specific issues together and work on these as a cohort. The plan is to incorporate this more into the next phase of the Action Plan. Currently, we have some basic data on gender and grades (Figure 3), which highlights that there are more male identifying individuals in positions of grade 6 and above compared to female. We want to gather more information on ethnicity and age, comparisons to similar institutions, and develop our recruitment based on this information. We would also like to develop outreach and public engagement to reach underrepresented demographics.

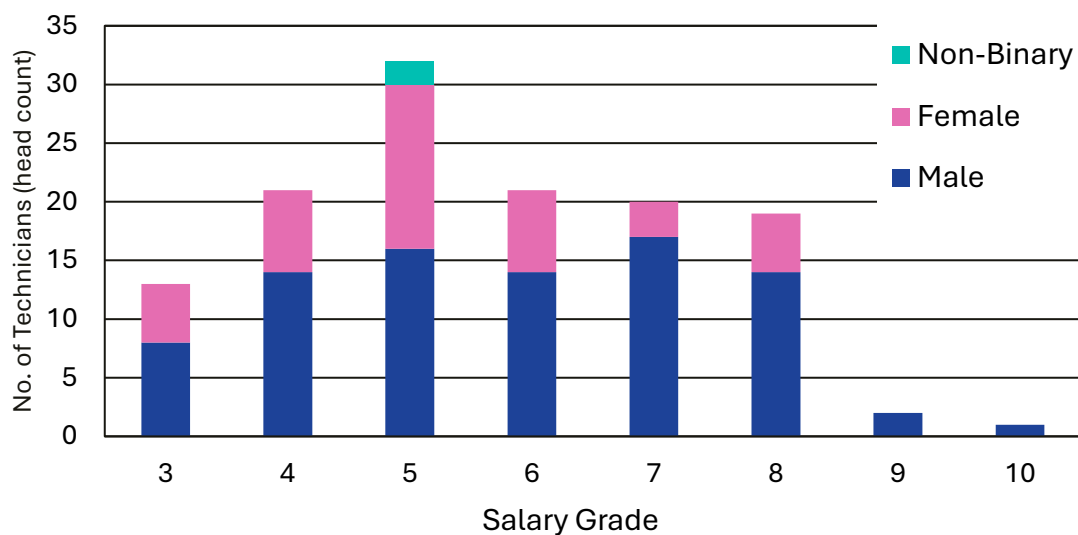


Figure 3. Distribution of technicians by gender identity across salary grades (3 being the lowest and 10 the highest). This graph illustrates the proportion of technicians identifying as male, female and non-binary within each salary grade category.

1.5 Technical Services Senior Management Team (SMT)

On a monthly basis the Technical Services Senior Management Team meet to update each other of issues, successes, and opportunities. We also review applications for the Career Development Fund from all technicians, ensuring parity and transparency in this funding process. It also provides the opportunity for Senior Technical Managers to feed upward comments and concerns about the Technician Commitment work and get more technician voice in general matters.

2. Our approach to the Technician Commitment

The approach we have looked to implement has been one of wide communications, progressive but consistent progress focused on giving technicians a sense of community within a larger complex organisation.

2.1 Visibility

2.1.1 Technician Webpages and Comms

A dedicated webpage (<https://www.sussex.ac.uk/staff/technicians/>) was established early on to explain what technical roles were present at the University of Sussex, that we had signed up to the Technician Commitment, share our action plan and provide an online a place for technicians to get resources associated with training and funding.

Wider communications with the University make sure the wider community know of the technicians at Sussex and the Technician Commitment work. A comms plan was established with Internal Communications utilising existing internal comms channels. Additionally, to ensure communication with all technicians directly a technician email list and MS teams' channel were creating, the latter including discussion boards for 'general' discussion, 'roll call' for introducing ourselves, 'job opportunities', 'skill sharing', 'training and event opportunities', 'technician commitment' and 'photos'.

2.1.2 Technician Events

A kick-off event was arranged shortly after signing up to the Technician Commitment. This was the first event for all technicians at Sussex university. Technicians were welcomes and asked for their views on how each of the 4 pillars of the commitment could be undertaken here at Sussex, using post-it notes which were recorded and digitised after. One of the resounding comments was: "More events!". Following this the Action Plan included two technician events a year (one on campus, on offsite), funded from a central pot for venue, food and external speaker/trainer costs.

Subsequently, the Sussex Technician Conference was held in July 2023 and the Sussex Winter Event in Dec 2023. Turnout has been positive, with between 60%—70% turnout of the total technicians for both events. After reviewing the events with feedback surveys, as well as creating an events team, technicians communicated that the summer event for 2024 should be a week of talks, competitions, challenges, wellbeing sessions, volunteering, training and networking. This is being organised currently and is called TechFest. More details to follow in our future submission.



Figure 4. All the Sussex Techs at the first Sussex Technician Conference (2023) where we had an axe throwing competition as well networking, talks on career progression and feedback on the Tech Commitment work. It was rated as the activity which contributed most to the Technician Commitment work at the University of Sussex.

2.1.3 Sussex Elements

Working with colleagues in the library we migrated all the University technician accounts onto our Current Research Information System (CRIS), called Elements. This is an internal and external facing database where anyone can search for individuals based on name, skills, experience and publications. A member of the Elements team gave a talk and demo of the system at the Winter Tech Event 2023. Technicians are encouraged to add what they want to their profiles, allowing technicians to add any other skills they have or areas they are interested in exploring further. An example of the profiles on the Elements system is shown in **Figure 5**.

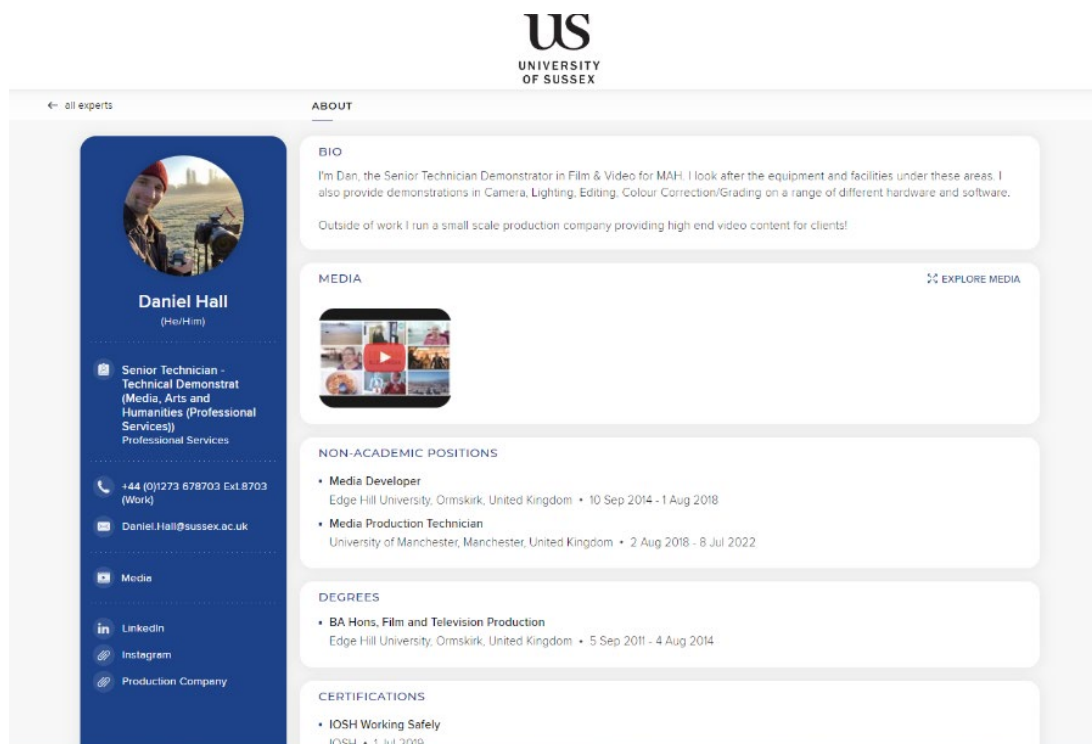


Figure 5. Example of a technician's profile on the Sussex Elements system.

2.1.4 Branded Clothing

As part of the Technician Conference 2023 each attendant received a gift bag with some University and technician branded items (notepad, pens, tape measure, lanyard and torch). Due to their popularity, other items including clothing were made with the University and Technician Commitment logos. These have become extremely popular and the clothing items were expanded to lab coats, jumpers, coats, t-shirts and caps. This has allowed technicians to become much more visible across campus, with academics and other professional services commenting on the clothing allowing them to identify technicians. Also, other technicians now say hello to each other when they see others in the clothes, creating connections and networks previously missed.

2.1.5 Professional Services Celebration Day

The University of Sussex held a Professional Services Celebration Day in the summer of 2023. Technical Services had a stall at this event, showcasing some of the work technicians do to support teaching and research. The stall included invertebrate specimens under microscopes, engineered parts for the race car made as part of Sussex Racing student project, various lab equipment and a 3D printer making some components for a DIY microscope. The table was seen by many PS colleagues, as well as senior leaders, and was voted as the most interesting stall of the event.

2.2 Recognition

2.2.1 Fair Recognition and Authorship for Technicians Guidance

We have created the Fair Recognition and Authorship for Technician Guidance document, which outlines why, when and how to ensure technicians are recognised and are named as authors for the work they do for publications (be in peer-review journal articles, books, method statements, etc.)

2.2.2 Professional Registration

Professional Registration is crucial to the career development of certain disciplines and also very important for some technicians in being recognised for their abilities, skills and experience. To ensure that those technicians who wish to become professionally registered could begin their journey, we established a Professional Registration Fund. This has since allowed technicians to apply for the money to begin their Professional Registration.

Furthermore, following an open discussion at the Winter Tech Event in 2023, it was identified that some technical disciplines and groups had very little need or benefit for Professional Registration, especially the creative industries. Henceforth, the Career Development Fund was established, where professional registration could still be applied for, however it was also open to all applications for funds which could support career development, e.g. running an exhibition, exploring a particular technique, etc.

2.2.3 Internal and External Awards

In 2024, the Chemistry Teaching Tech team were awarded the Better World Award, which is for staff who actively engaged in efforts to make a positive impact in the local community - and wider world - in creative and entrepreneurial ways. In 2023, Kristy Flowers, Senior Technical Manager for Teaching labs in Life Sciences was nominated for the Papin Prize. Other nominations have been entered into the Times Higher Education Awards.

2.3 Career Development

2.3.1 Career Pathways

During the technical review, new job descriptions for technical staff were written from templates created which fit along one of two career pathways. These pathways were Generalist/Managerial, and Specialist. New role Job Descriptions have continued to be created following the templates. This retains the consistency in grades and their responsibilities. As is shown later, many technicians at Sussex want more done around the Career Pathways, including looking at promotion based on these pathways. One thing we need to do more is communicate that these Pathways exist and how exactly technicians can be ready to move up the pathway when opportunities arise. Also, something we want to look at is how can technicians on the specialist pathway apply for promotion based on role development and experience, using a similar approach of University of Warwick and the University of Liverpool.

2.3.2 Career Development Fund

Initially we established a training fund for the Technician Commitment at Sussex and looked to provide the training outlined from the NTDC skills survey and support professional registration. Once this was done, we wanted to make sure that other technical training opportunities could be maximized upon and technicians themselves could suggest training they wanted to go on.

Following a discussion with all technicians at our Winter Event in 2023, there was overwhelming support for a general fund that technicians could apply for funds to support their career development. We created the Technician Career Development Fund, where technicians can apply for funding to undertake any career development initiative including specialist training, professional registration, exhibitions, projects, etc. They apply for this via an application form, giving technicians experience and confidence in applying for funding. The applications are then assessed at the Technical Services SMT where technical leaders assess and decide on the outcome of an application.

2.4 Sustainability

2.4.1 Careers Fair

Ensuring the future of technician teams is crucial to making sure we have a sustainable team here at the University of Sussex. We are keen to ensure our graduates and local young people know of Technical Services as a possible career choice. Hence, as part of the joint University of Sussex and University of Brighton Career Day held at the Amex Stadium, we had a stall showcasing the variety of roles for technicians and some entry level roles being advertised.

2.4.2 Technical Structures and cross-departmental collaboration

Now all technical teams are linked to a single point of management (Ass. Director of Technical Operations), the technical teams can work much better together. A Senior Management Team meeting is held with the senior technical managers to share news and updates from each area. This helps bring the teams together for aligned training or development opportunities. Internal technical roles are advertised on our MS Teams channels and sent to all technical staff on our mailing list so we can help technicians move between departments and disciplines where possible and retain trained and experienced staff.

2.4.3 Apprenticeships

During our we have had one successful Level 7 apprentices complete their apprenticeship in Senior Leadership with distinction. Three technicians are on the IAT Level 2 Animal Tech Unit course, and once they've completed this they will go on to do the Apprenticeship for Animal Technicians – which has been delayed as there were very few providers offering this apprenticeship.

There have been several offered apprenticeships that do not have the support or standard we would like to offer our technicians. We have had meetings with apprenticeship providers and Universities around the country, to research and learn about practices, processes and how to best implement apprenticeships for our Technical staff and be able to support them. We have offered some apprenticeships to our current Technical staff, however the offers were not suitable for requirements, or manageable with current work and life pressures. We're working towards creating processes across Technical Services, in line with the central Apprenticeship team at the University of Sussex, in order to integrate them into the schools, in a systematic and sustainable way.

We have been involved in discussions with the London & South-East Technician Commitment Apprenticeship sub group, as there have been concerns about the college and learning aspect of the offered Technical Apprenticeships, and the learning styles of Technical Staff so online courses may not be suitable.

This is therefore an area we want to develop and grow, however we want to do this in a sustainable way that embeds apprenticeships into the culture of the university, so our staff can get most of the opportunity, and so we can create a consistent and well managed collaborative program.

2.5 Governance and Reporting Lines

A steering group was established and has met every 3 months throughout Stage 1 and 2 of the Commitment work, and is set to continue meeting through Stage 3 of the commitment work. This Steering Group is chaired by the Pro-Vice Chancellor of Research and Innovation, Professor Keith Jones, who is the University Executive Person (UPE) for the initiative and sits on the University Leadership Team. The other members of

the Steering Group include;

- Associate Director of Technical Operations (Senior Responsible Person)
- Senior Administrator - Technical Services/Technician Commitment Co-ordinator
- Senior Technical Managers from each school/area
- Science, Engineering and Media Academic Leads
- Occupational Health Representative
- Finance Representative
- Communications Representative
- Head of Professional Service for Science and Engineering



Photo Credit Christopher Moore, Workshop Manager, as part of the 2023 Tech Photo Competition

2.6 Resources

With the creation of the Action Plan, it was clear one of the major risks to meeting the actions was resource allocation, both in terms of a defined budget and personnel who can drive forward the initiative. This was also highlighted in working groups at the start of the commitment work when we wanted technicians to input into the action plan – “how much money do we have, because that changes what we do?”. Following this, a budget was also established outside of school budgets to ensure that funding for the actions was not impeded. This is crucial to meeting the action plan in providing an easily accessible pot of funds for events, training, branded items and prizes.

During the Technical Review a Technician Commitment Co-ordinator was appointed and has been instrumental in gaining buy-in from technicians, promoting the technical voice and making sure the technician events are well organised and attended.

2.7 Wider Community Engagement

2.7.1. London and South-East Technician Commitment Network

Through the Technician Commitment work we have joined and become members of the London & South-East Technician Commitment Network. The Technician Commitment Co-Ordinator at Sussex, Vicky McDonald, is also on a Working group within this network looking at establishing and promoting apprenticeships across the network members.

2.7.2. Eastern Alliance Research Consortium (EARC)

Earlier in 2024 the University of Sussex joined the Eastern Alliance Research Consortium (EARC), of which the other institutions include the University of East Anglia, University of Kent, and University of Essex. As part of this, we have joined the EARC Technician Commitment Network. The Associate Director of Technical Operations, Rob Fowler, and Technical Supervisor, Kurtis Mengham, are co-chairs on the steering group. The University of Sussex is hosting the next EARC Technician Commitment Network Symposium in July 2024.

4. Action Plan Progress and Comments

Please see the attached spreadsheet called “Sussex Action Plan 24 Month Update” (also **Appendix 3**) for progress against our Action Plan, plus comments on how we have met or progresses each action.

5. Measuring and evidencing the impact the Action Plan

Measuring and evidencing the impact our action plan has in several ways. First and foremost, we have regular Steering Group Meetings which includes an update on our progress against the action plan. A RAG status is given to all actions, with action leads taking responsibility for each action.

5.1 Training, Professional Registration and Career Development Fund

One of the main ways we have assessed impact is metrics and outputs which come directly from the work the action plan has undertaken. This includes the number of training courses completed, as well as the number of professionally registered people we have helped to begin their registration (**Table 1**). We also have a member of staff who has recently successfully completed their Level 7 Apprenticeship in Leadership and Management with a distinction.



Photo Credit Daniel Hall, Senior Technician Demonstrator (Film & Video), as part of the 2023 Tech Photo Competition

Table 1. Current list of Professional Registrations and training courses by/for technicians following the Technician Commitment work at the University of Sussex, taking advantage of the institutional funding.

Professional Registered Person	Professional Membership/Award
Technician in Life Sciences	RSciTech or IBMS
Technician in Life Sciences	Chartered Scientist, CChem BMSS
Technician in Life Sciences	Registered Scientist (RSci)
Technician in Life Sciences	Chartered Membership
Technician in Life Sciences/Ops and Planning	Member MRSB
Technician in Life Sciences	Full Member Rate
Training Provided following NTDC Skills Survey	Training Course
15 Technicians across Life Sciences	Sustainable Science and Green Laboratories HEaTED Training
2 Technicians took part in 22/23, and 5 Technicians in 23/24	Herschel Programme for Women in Technical Leadership
25 Technicians across all schools	Confidence training: 'How to Say No'
Media Tech Team	QLab training course for the Team & Pro Tools Production I (PT201) course, Pro Tool PT101 Fundamentals, Pro Tools PT110 Fundamentals 2, Leadership & Management 2 day
Embedded Tech H&S Team	PAT Training, Tallescope Training, First Aid Training, Appliance Testing in Theatres, Networking for Entertainment Technicians
Psychology Technicians	AWS Certified Cloud Practitioner
Life Science Technicians	An Introduction to Access and Inclusive Design, Access auditing & the equality Act, Inclusive Loos, Reading and understanding plans, NEBOSH Certificate, Technicians supporting Outreach activities, Emotional Intelligence for Technicians, Effective communication and Networking skills
4 Techs across schools	Technical Leaders Programme ITSS
10 Techs across schools	Assertiveness training HeATED

Table 2. Applications approved as part of the Career Development Fund, where technicians can apply for funding to support their career development, be that professional registration, conference or event attendance, training, or to support another initiative.

Career Development Fund Apps	Amount Funded
To run a Sussex Uni Art and Science exhibition – 5 Techs	£500
Renew Cert. IOSH Membership	£163
NEBOSH- H&S qualification	£1,314
MACH 2024 Exhibition – 4 techs across 2 schools	£886
Travel for Plasma event – 7 Techs	£200
SISO training day, London – 3 Techs	£68
PT 110 Pro Tools Fundamentals 2 course.	£500
Pro Tools Production II (PT210) Course	£500
HEaTED Creative Practitioners Network Event – 6 Techs across different schools	£620
IAT Level 2 Animal Tech Unit – 3 techs	£1,500
Total: 32 Techs involved	£6,250 total

5.2 Technician Engagement

One key measurement of how much impact the Action Plan is having is based on the level of technician engagement with the activities. When the first event was held launching the Technician Commitment work at Sussex, technicians feedback what they wanted from the Action Plan. One key element was more events. The events held as part of the Commitment have been the highlight for many of the technical staff. These are where technicians get a chance to meet other technicians (often for the first time), get a better understanding of the work each other do and have specific talks/events related to their work. We have had good turnout at these events, with around 60%-70% of all technicians for both the Sussex Technician Conference in 2023 and the Sussex Winter Event in Dec 2023.

Communications for technicians have increased significantly, with many posts regarding training opportunities, updates and new roles posted. Technician Newsletters are sent out with information about the wider context of the Technician Commitment, successes of technicians or teams, new funds for applying for money, etc. Engagement with this Newsletter is assessed based on the number of deliveries, opens and subsequent clicks on links, outlined in **Figure 6**.



Figure 6 – The level of engagement from technicians with our Technician Newsletter, showing number of individuals the newsletter was sent to, opens and interactions with the content via clicks on links.

5.3 Technician Feedback

A key element of measuring success is how the initiative has been felt on the ground by technicians. To assess this, a short survey for technicians was launched in May 2024. The results highlight that the work is making a difference, albeit this change is not fully felt by everyone.

This survey showed technicians ranked the Technician Conference 2023 (the first conference held, and one which being repeated with a week of technician events in 2024) as the best part of the Technician Commitment work at Sussex. Second was the dedicated Career Development fund which technicians can apply for.

Most technicians understood the work of the Technician Commitment. Out of 97 technicians, 49 reported their working life has become much better, or slightly better, with the Technician Commitment work. In terms of how valued technicians feel, 36 out of 97 said they felt more valued. However, 25 said no change, 7 couldn't say, and 2 felt less valued. In addition, only 33 out of 97 felt that the work had improved their career progression opportunities. (Graphs of outputs in **Appendix 4**). Also, some of the key comments made by technicians can be seen in **Appendix 5**.

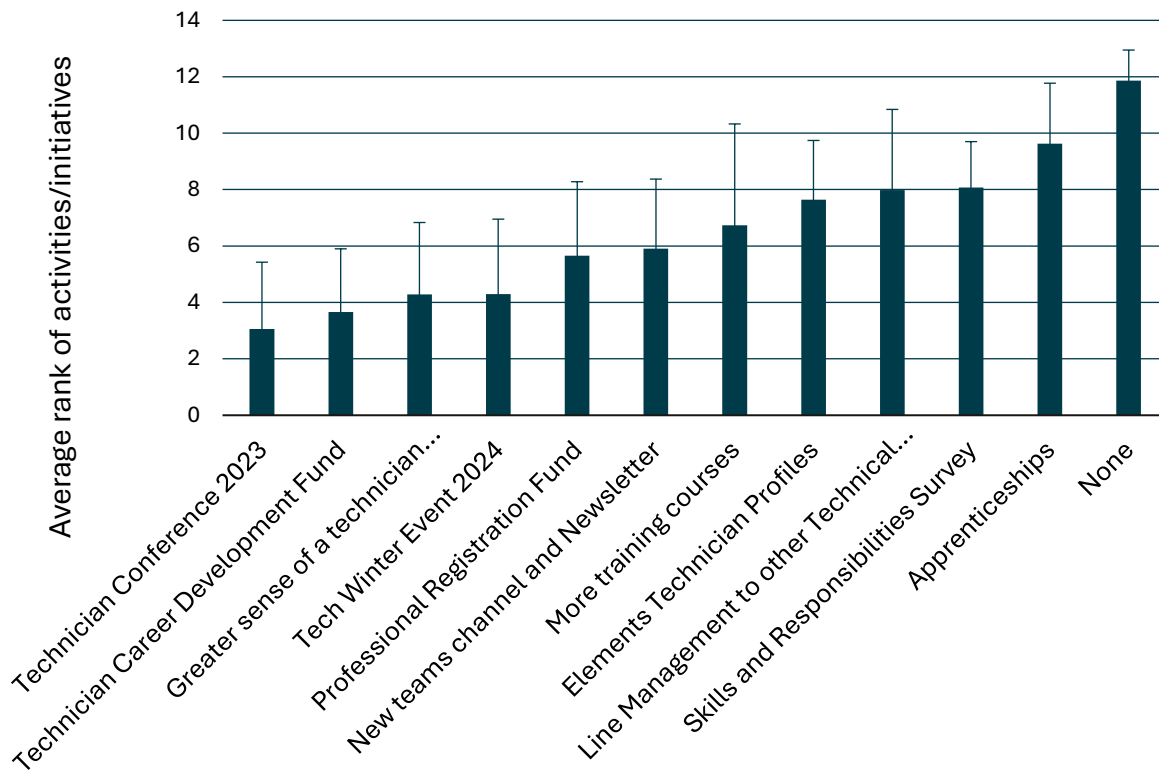


Figure 7. A bar chart of which activities technicians believe contributed most to the Technician Commitment work at Sussex. The values represent average and SD of where technicians would rank each activity. (97 responses)

Whilst many are positive and welcome, it is important to take the less positive comments and feed that into the new action plan. The main points we have taken include:

- Career Pathways need greater communication to all technicians, so they are known and that there are two pathways here
- Bring plans about promotion and career progression more to the forefront of the commitment work
- Make the work of the initiative more visible to non-technical colleagues at the University, and ensure senior management are aware and attend events
- Some technicians do not see the Technician Commitment work impacting them, and greater work needs to be done to assess impact and reach these technicians

6. University of Sussex's 36-month Action Plan

The 36 month action plan can be found in more detail in **Appendix 6**.

The original Action Plan did account for 3 years, so we could continue the work whilst this submission was written. As with the original action plan, technicians were asked what they would like to see in this new action plan going forward. **Figure 8** shows the main responses, with Career Pathways, Improving Technician Visibility and Greater Involvement with External Companies/Skills Sharing are the most important elements that technicians want to see more work on.

The 'Other' option included suggestions such as

- Skill sharing across Schools
- Helping develop services and facilities to internal and importantly to external clients, e.g. calibration, imaging, fabrication etc.
- CPD options
- Inter-department work

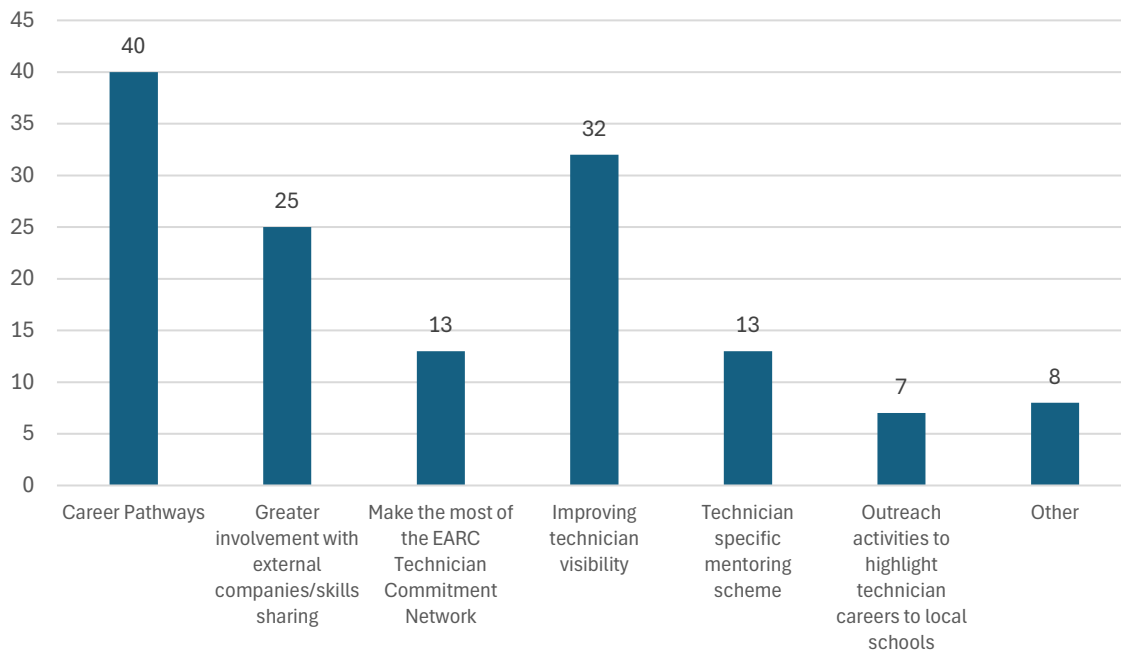
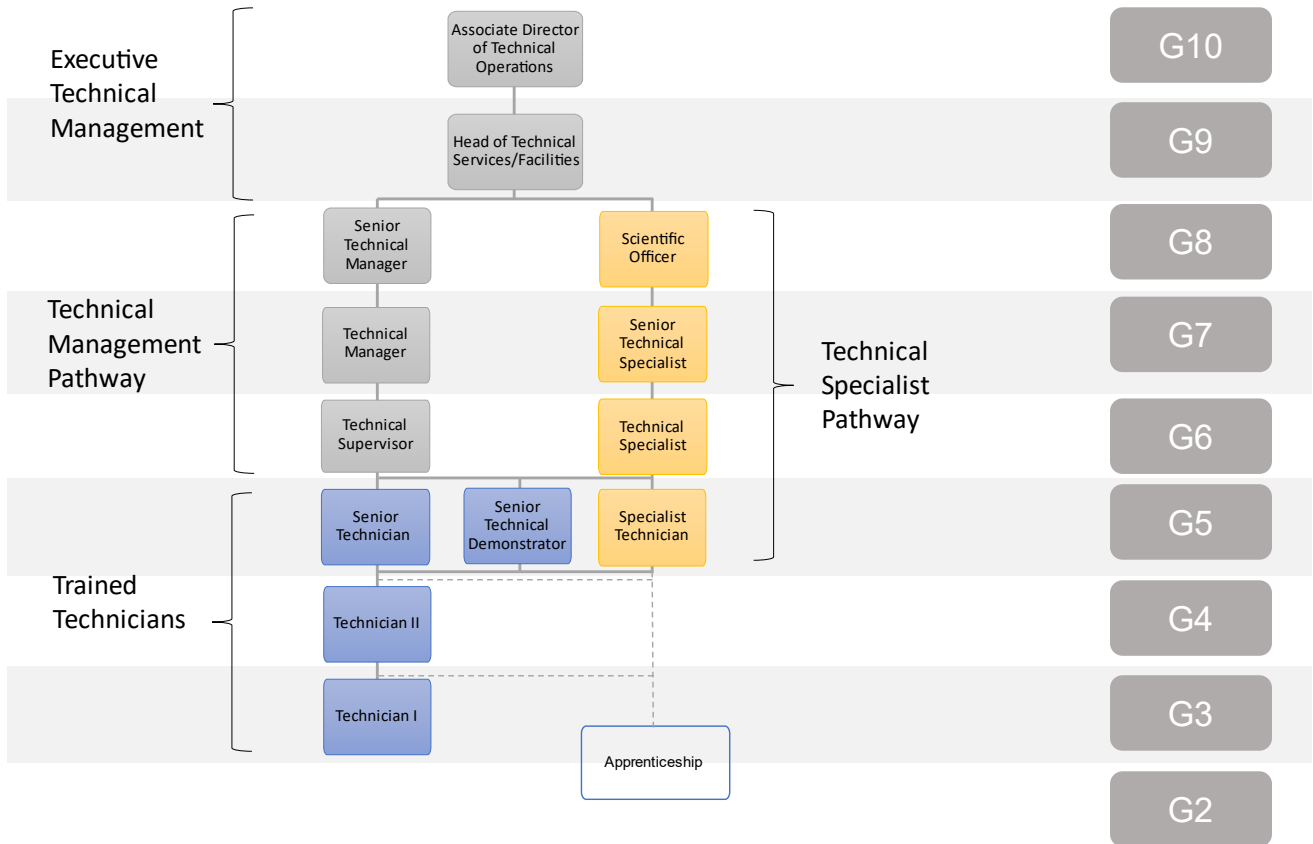


Figure 8 – Responses from technicians when asked what the next Technician Commitment Action Plan should focus on. The areas raised in the 'Other' option are listed above.

7. Appendix

Appendix 1 – Technician Career Pathways at the University of Sussex



Appendix 2 -Staff feedback during the Technical Review, showing what was commented on and how we actioned this in the plan and implementation.

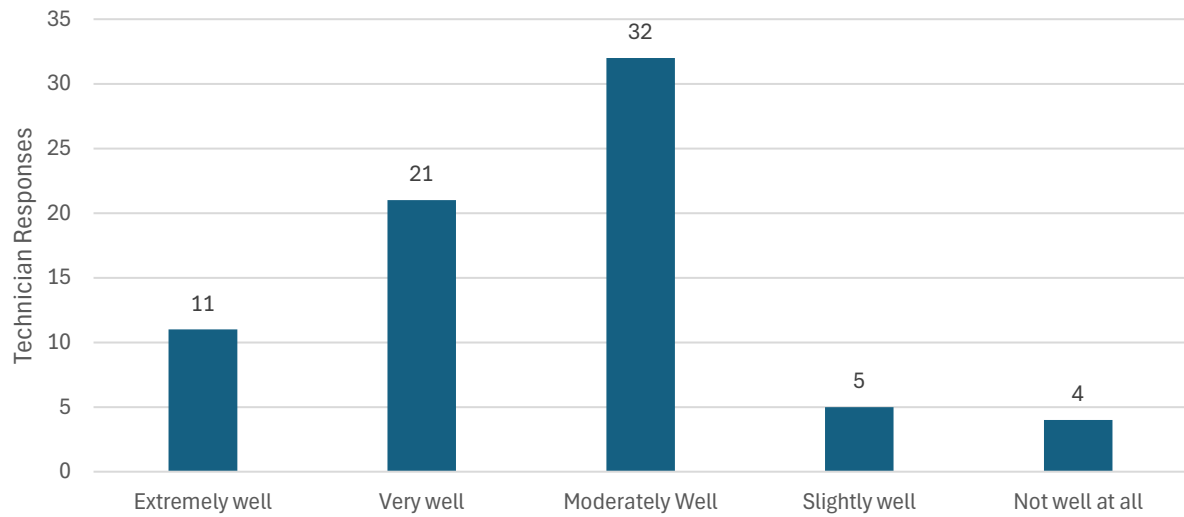
Staff Feedback – Structure & Delivery Model

Area	You said	We did/will do
ACCA	The new annualised hours roles should be 3 roles at 0.75FTE at grade 5, rather than a mix of grade 4 and 5 (requested by Creative Director).	This change has been made to the proposals
MAH	Requested changes to some roles to ensure comparability across the team/university, amended reporting lines (requested by Technical Manager and some technicians in MAH).	These changes have been made to the proposals
MAH	If changes go ahead as they were proposed, the new Sen. Tech. Manager role for Arts and Humanities may be less available to the core team and the part time deputy role that has been proposed will be an insufficient replacement. Expressed disappointment that progression opportunity were not available for the core MAH team.	More detail on the responsibilities of the Senior Technical Manager and of new Technical Manager role has been shared with the team. Line management for core team will not change.
Life Sci	Raised concern about resilience and flexibility of the teaching team's new structure and about the impact this may have in supporting the curriculum review.	Annual resource reviews have been planned and can inform change in technical teams going forward. The first of these will take place once the curriculum review is complete so resourcing issues can be addressed then.
E&I	Possible alternative line management of the ITS team had been suggested, but they were keen for line management of their team to stay within the School.	That team will continue to be managed within the school and continue to work routinely with ITS, complying with relevant policy
PS Management	For consistency in Professional Services structures, all Professional Services staff, including technicians, should be line managed by other Professional Services staff.	Some line management has changed to reflect this and ensure consistency across the Technical Services teams

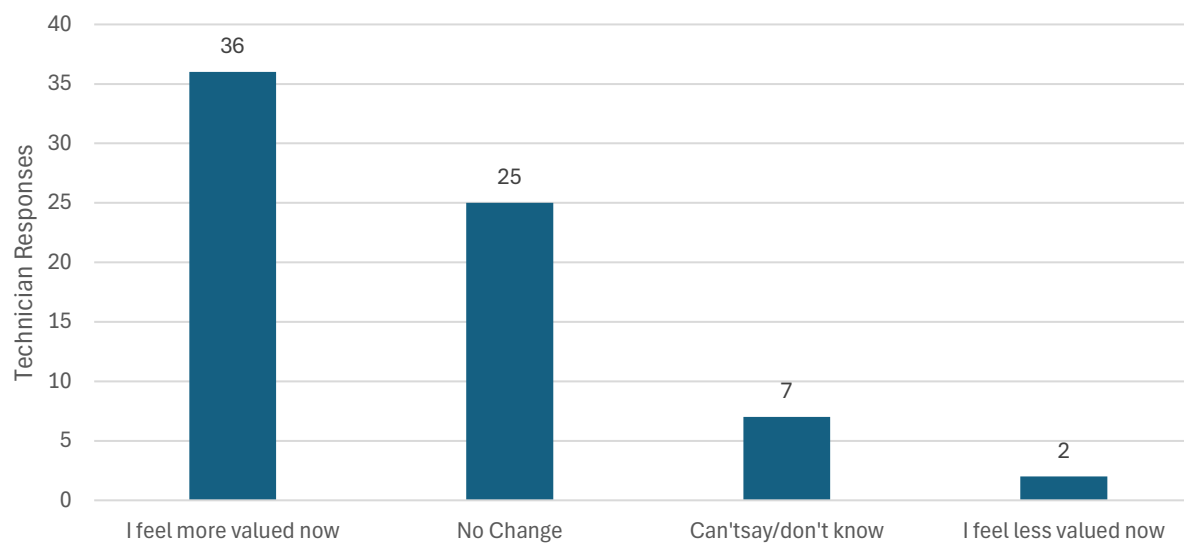
Appendix 4 - 24 Month Action Plan for the University of Sussex 2022-25 - Comments on progress

Action	Who	Prior to 2022	Phase 1 - 2022/23			Phase 2 - 2023/24			Phase 3 - 2024/25			Current Status (RAG)	Comment
			01/04/2022	01/07/2022	01/10/2022	01/01/2023	01/04/2023	01/07/2023	01/10/2023	01/01/2024	01/04/2024		
Overarching Actions													
Maintain regular liaison with Technician Commitment Lead	IL/ADTO/TCC											Ongoing/in progress	Regular meetings are held between Co-ordinator and lead for the Commitment, as well as Steering Group meetings. There is also TC catch ups at the Technical Services Senior Management Team (SMT) Meetings.
Review and refine governance of the Technician Commitment at Sussex	IL/ADTO											Complete	Steering Group meetings were set up to provide overarching governance for the work of the TC at Sussex beginning this, the Institutional Lead for the project changed from the Head of School of Life Sciences to 1 Vice Chancellor of Research and Enterprise. The p-VC leading the initiative gives us greater senior leaders in for the project, and was crucial in securing a set budget for the TC project.
Establish TC co-ordinator and administrative support to drive this action plan	ADTO											Complete	TC Coordinator in place. Has done great work in ensuring this action plan is progressing.
Review of line management arrangements for technicians and make recommendations to ensure involvement of technical/professional service managers in addition to academics	IL/ADTO/HOTS	Undertaken as part of the Technical Services Review										Complete	All technicians now have at least co-line management with another technician, most have direct full line management to another technician. The technicians with line management responsibility have this write their job descriptions, and supervisor and manager training is providing by the University.
Identify initiatives to increase number of BAME technicians in the University	TCC											Complete	EDI-Technical Services Group is set up – including conduits to school EDI Committees
Visibility													
Communicate the aims of the Technician Commitment widely across the University - including a comms plan	TCC/CM											Complete	A comms plan was established early in the process, identifying best methods for communicating to technicians and across the University. Internal Comms were involved in the comms plan, and we have published internal comms pieces on the technician commitment work at Sussex, as well as links to the Technician Commitment the Professional Services Essentials internal comms messages. The main forms of communication for technicians are a technician mailing list and a technician MS Teams channel.
Develop the Technician Commitment website as the 'go to' place for technicians to support their development, career progression, networking and access to resources	TCC/ADTO/CM	Undertaken, in part, with the Technical Services Review										Complete	The Website has been created. There are limitations on what we can do with it and how creative we can the University is currently looking to move to a new Website Content Management System. We have updated the website with new photos, information and documents as we progress through the action plan.
Use forums or other means of general communication to contact technicians and key stakeholders	TCC	Undertaken as part of the Technical Services Review										Ongoing/in progress	The main forms of communication for technicians are a technician mailing list and a technician MS Teams channel. The topics include the themes of the Technician Commitment, as well as posting about internal external job and training opportunities. We also have a technician newsletter which is sent to all technicians.
Support and promote the work of the Technician Commitment Working Group - including social media posts	TCC/ADTO/CM											Ongoing/in progress	We have established an X account for the @SussexTechs, and this has posted some elements from the events/initiatives we have undertaken here. Our focus has been mainly on the internal comms however a teams channel for getting information to our technicians.
Coordinate a technicians' photography project to build on the images of technical staff in our photo repository, reflecting the diversity of technical roles and technicians across the University.	TCC/ADTO/CM											Complete	We had a great response from the photo competitions, which had added some amazing photos from technicians' perspectives. Elements (research profile pages) are now live with technician profiles migrate We had Steve Cross at our Summer Conference 2023 where he took profile pictures of technicians to add their profiles. We have also had professional photography taken at the events to help build out photo data
Recognition													
Utilise University wide websites and the Technicians Make it Happen website, to promote the work of technicians and opportunities for technicians	TCC/ADTO											Complete	We have created our technician website on the main University of Sussex webpages. We have linked to Technicians Make it Happen website, as well as the Technician Commitment, National Technician Development Centre and IST websites as well.
Support technicians with gaining professional registration status	TCC/ADTO											Ongoing/in progress	A fund was set up, with 6 technicians using this to gain professional registration/membership. Professional registration was highlighted at the Winter Tech Event in 2023, including a talk by Abid Qayum, Head of Sc Operations, Nottingham School of Art & Design. The outcome of this session and wider discussion was to 'Career Development Fund' as recognised professional registration not as applicable to some technician cohort do continue to support those wanting to gain professional registration.
Establish a Technician Recognition Scheme based on the Discretionary Pay Review	IL/ADTO/TMs/CM											Ongoing/in progress	We are looking to adapt the current DPR process to allow a specific group to assess all technician applications a bonus or scale point increase. We are looking to have this in place by September 2024 for the upcoming round.
Encourage nominations for local and national awards eg Times Higher	TCC/ADTO											Ongoing/in progress	We have had a Papin award nominee, and we have made several applications for the Times Higher award
Career Development													
Undertake Skills, Roles and Responsibilities Survey of all technical staff, using results to inform skills gaps and training needs	IL/ADTO/TMs/CM	Undertaken as part of the Technical Services Review										Complete	This was undertaken as part of the Technical Review. The outcomes of the survey produced an assessment of the key training areas to focus on, which were taken on board. We purchased HEaTED credits in early 2022 provided this key training to a number of technicians from across the University.

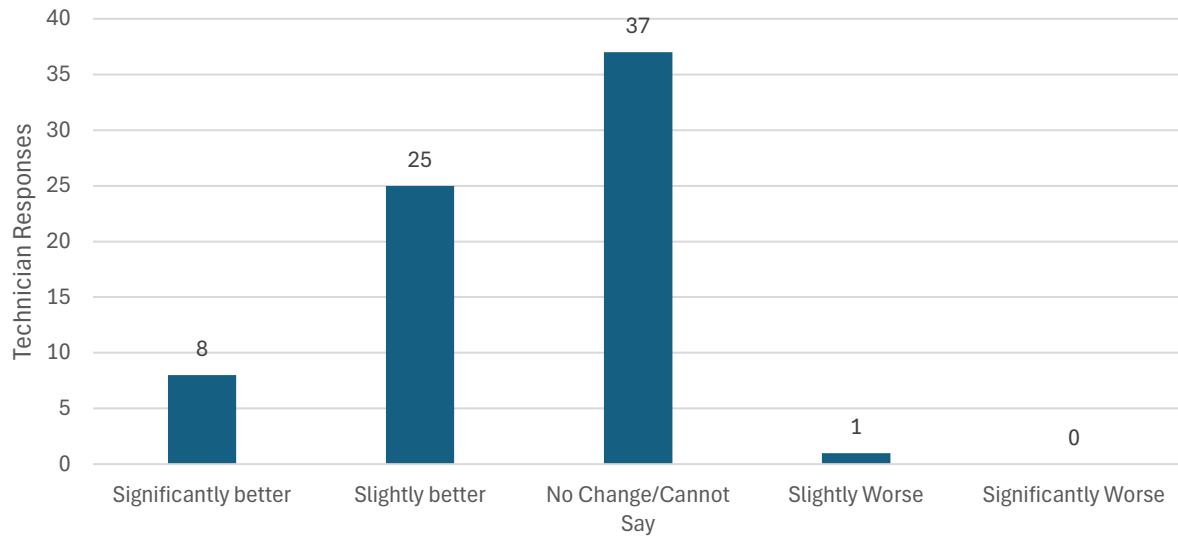
Appendix 4 – Output from the Short Survey we undertook in May 2024 to assess the impact of the Technician Commitment work here at the University of Sussex



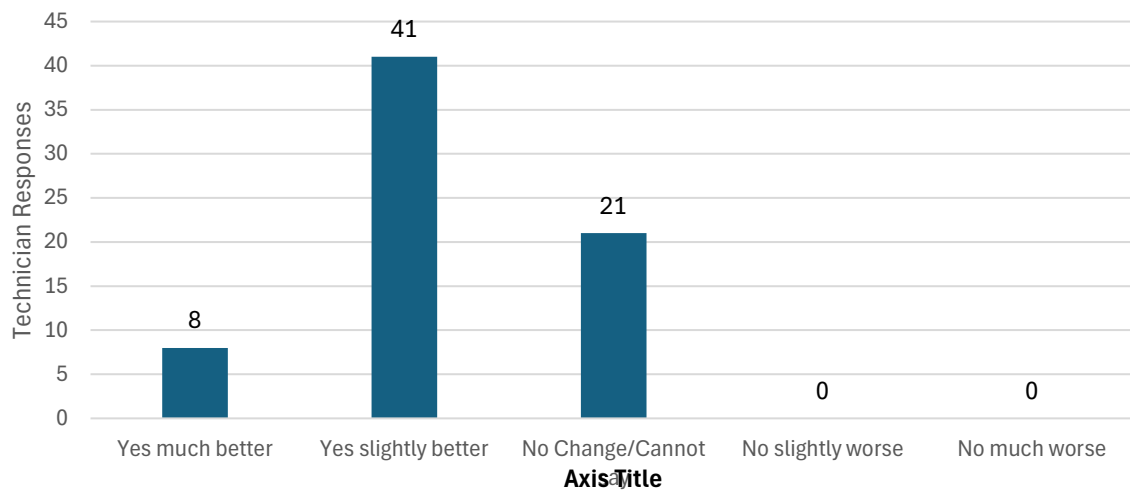
Output from the question "How well do you understand the work of the Technician Commitment here at the University of Sussex?"



Output from the question "Has the Technician Commitment work changed how valued you feel at the University of Sussex?"



Output from the question "How much do you think the Technician Commitment work at the University of Sussex has improved on your career progression opportunities?"



Output from the question "Overall, do you think the Technician Commitment work at the University of Sussex has improved your working life?"

Appendix 5 - Some of the comments from technicians on the work of the commitment so far include:

Great work!
Feels like a great start! Keep it up
It's great to feel more appreciated & part of a team and the bigger picture of working at Sussex. But in real terms we still have no grade progression for technicians who has learned more as time goes on and no points for loyalty.
It's truly wonderful, as a technician, to know that there's people looking out for me and raising our profile. Thank you for you work!
I think it has a great opportunity to show of Technicians and elevate them in people's opinions/appreciation HOWEVER everything seems pushed towards us technicians, we already know how vital we are. I think we also need to be making this a very visible scheme/commitment that all members of staff + students are aware of.
I think it has improved motivation of technicians and it's nice to feel part of something university wide not just within technicians within the school
A welcome pack or some way of introducing new staff to the Technician Commitment?
I think it is great
It has been able to open trade events to staff
Thanks for all your hard work! :)
I think the work is valuable at keeping skill within the technical community at Sussex providing community for the technicians and funds for progression and opportunities
A good aspect to the institute & should be continually supported.
Working with line managers and higher for specific career pathways
I have not had any benefit from the commitment. I do not feel any of the focus on technician qualifications applies to my role.

Appendix 6 - 36 Month Plan for the University of Sussex 2024-2027

Action	Who	Year 3 - 2024/25			Year 4 - 2025/26			Year 5 - 2026/27			Current Status		
		01/06/2024	01/07/2024	01/10/2024	01/10/2025	01/04/2025	01/07/2025	01/10/2025	01/01/2026	01/04/2026		01/07/2026	01/10/2026
Overarching Actions													
Maintain regular liaison with Technician Commitment Lead	IL/ADTO/TCC												Continuous
Continue to improve and add content to the Technician website, using the new Website Content Management System once in place.	ADTO/TCC												Continuous
Visibility													
Ensure senior leadership team are invited to key events, ensuring senior leaders understand the initiative at Sussex and the presence and achievements of technicians	IL/ADTO/TCC												Ongoing/in progress
Ensure Internal comms about technicians, their successes and the tech commitment work are publicised. Specifically adding technician based content to the PS Essentials messages sent by the COO or other senior PS members of staff.	IL/ADTO/TCC												Ongoing/in progress
Use forums or other means of general communication to contact technicians and key stakeholders	TCC												Continuous
Support and promote the work of the Technician Commitment Working Group - including social media posts	TCC/ADTO/CM												Continuous
Recognition													
Support technicians with gaining professional registration status	TCC/ADTO												Continuous
Establish a Technician Recognition Scheme based on the Discretionary Pay Review	IL/ADTO/TMs/CM												Ongoing/in progress
Encourage nominations for local and national awards eg Times Higher	TCC/ADTO												Continuous
Career Development													
Ensure some financial support for training, conference attendance and professional registration for technicians across the University, equitably.	ADTO/TMs												Continuous
Deliver Technician Networking events regularly through the year	TCC												Continuous
Maintain links with appropriate national bodies and their resources eg Higher Education and Technicians Education Development (HEaTED), National Technician Development Centre (NTDC)	IL/ADTO/HOTS												Continuous
We will support technicians to attend relevant conferences organised by external bodies to encourage professional networking and cross-sector learning	ADTO/TMs												Continuous
Connect with other external bodies (including University and professional) to ensure consistency between science and arts technicians in the actions undertaken for the commitment (e.g. bectu and IAT)	ADTO/TMs												Continuous
Review and look to extend the Online Career Development Tool to include technician skills and attributes, and engage technicians with this	PD/TCC												Ongoing/in progress
Consider setting up a Mentoring Pilot Scheme for technicians, implement.	PD/TCC												Ongoing/in progress
Ensure work on Career Pathways are communicated to all techs, hold workshops and include in career development forums/discussions. Sign post and ensure clearly defined on website.	ADTO/TMs												Ongoing/in progress
Consider promotion process/guidance for technicians, based on UoWarwick and UoLiverpool. Link to academic promotions process currently under review at Sussex	IL/ADTO/TCC												Ongoing/in progress
Sustainability													
Increase outreach activities with local schools/colleges to promote technician careers and work experience	TCC/ADTO/TMs												Ongoing/in progress
Produce roadmap of key career stages for technicians from apprenticeships upwards	TCC/ADTO/HOTS												Ongoing/in progress
Promote skills sharing between schools at Sussex, encourage technicians to 'try' new skills in areas outside of their skill area.	ADTO/TCC/TMs												Ongoing/in progress
Work with the Eastern ARC Technician Network on skills sharing, career opportunities, RTPs and T-PIKE	ADTO/TCC/TMs												Ongoing/in progress
Support and promote greater relationships with external companies and organisations for skills sharing, collaboration and work placements. Link this to providing facility-based services to these partners.	ADTO/TCC/TMs												Ongoing/in progress
Evaluating Impact													
Establish evaluation criteria to measure success of the Technician Commitment at Sussex, specifically internal recruitment, grade/salary increases, number of applicants	TCC												Ongoing/in progress
Complete annual evaluation report for Technician Commitment Steering Group, include progress against metrics; lessons learnt, targets for future years	TCC/ADTO/HOTS												Ongoing/in progress
Review and update action plan with input from technician survey, Technician Commitment Lead and technicians	TCC/ADTO/HOTS												Ongoing/in progress

Key for Who Column
IL: Institutional Lead
ADTO Associate Director of Technical Operations
HOTS Head of Technical Services
TCC: Technician Commitment Co-ordinator
TMs, Technician Managers
AM, Apprenticeship Manager
CM, Comms Manager
WG: Technician Commitment Working Group
PD: Professional Development team