



**University of  
Nottingham**

UK | CHINA | MALAYSIA

Technician **Commitment**

# **Our Technician Commitment**

[nottingham.ac.uk/technicians](https://nottingham.ac.uk/technicians)



Over **700**  
**technicians**

across our UK,  
China and Malaysia  
campuses

We are a founding  
member of the  
**Technician  
Commitment**



With over  
**7 years**  
**dedication**  
to the pledge

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# Introduction

**The University of Nottingham's technical community are vital to the success of our institution. Our highly skilled and expert technical staff are essential to delivering research and teaching on an international stage.**

We employ over 700 technicians across our campuses in the UK, China and Malaysia. They have expertise that spans a wide range of disciplines and they make a fundamental contribution towards the university's aims to deliver excellence in research and knowledge exchange, teaching and the student experience.

The University of Nottingham is proud to be a founding signatory of the Technician Commitment – a sector wide initiative, backed by a range of stakeholders – to ensure visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability for the technical community in higher education and research.

The University of Nottingham, together with the University of Cambridge, were the first to pledge their support to the Technician Commitment on its launch in May 2017. Our response to the Technician Commitment took the form of our 'Vision for Technical Talent' strategy – an action plan that outlined our key activity to address the key pillars of the Technician Commitment. The first of these was published in 2018 and a refreshed version was launched in June 2022.

Technician **Commitment**



# Progress

The Technical Services Managers Committee (TSMC) has ownership and responsibility for the delivery of the University of Nottingham's Technician Commitment. The TSMC meets quarterly and is chaired by Professor Sam Kingman, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Faculty of Engineering. Professor Kingman is the University Executive Board Sponsor for the Technician Commitment and provides strategic guidance to the initiative.

We have made considerable progress in our work to raise visibility, recognition and opportunity for our technical community since signing the Technician Commitment in 2017.

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We have **extended the Technical Services job family** to levels 6 and 7, in line with the University's Research and Teaching (R&T) and Administrative, Professional and Managerial (APM) job families. This extension has **led to an increased number of technical staff at senior leadership and specialist grades** and provided a **progression pathway**.

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The development of a **new and refreshed University of Nottingham Technician Network** has provided technical colleagues with valuable development opportunities and facilitated open afternoons at various facilities, laboratories, and workshops across and beyond the university. We have also **demonstrated leadership by hosting the UK Higher Education Technicians Summit in 2019, 2021, and 2023**.

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**To enhance communication and engagement**, we introduced a university-wide newsletter for technical staff, which has enjoyed wide and increasing readership. **Recognising the crucial role of technical staff in the student experience, we have included them in graduation ceremonies**. Additionally, University of Nottingham staff have edited and contributed chapters to a new book, "**Technicians in Higher Education and Research: An Insight into Technical Careers, Roles and Contributions**," set to be published in July 2024.

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We have led sector-wide reports on issues such as equality, diversity and inclusion, the impact of COVID-19 on the technical workforce in UK higher education, health and safety, knowledge exchange and research culture. Together with partners, **we have secured over £12m in funding for national sector-wide initiatives to support the technical community**.

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**Our active participation in the Midlands Innovation Technical Placement Programme**, launched in January 2019, saw a 30% participation rate from UoN. **We secured £0.5m in EPSRC funding to explore and advance Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI), with a significant focus on the technical community.** The Technician Sustainability Working Group, launched as part of our efforts to ensure environmental sustainability, continues to make a significant impact.

We have worked to **ensure the visibility of technical colleagues in university policy and guidance**, promoting appropriate recognition of technicians on research outputs. A dedicated website for technicians, [nottingham.ac.uk/technicians](http://nottingham.ac.uk/technicians), has been created to further support and showcase their work. Our collaboration with the Digital Communications Team has raised the visibility of technical staff through university channels, including the creation of **‘Technician Stories’ films**.

Increased formal recognition of technical colleagues has been achieved through awards such as **the Vice-Chancellor’s Medal and the Lord Dearing Awards**. Our technical staff have also authored sector articles and blogs and presented at various sector events, including the **UK Technical Managers in Universities Annual Conference, the Royal Society of Chemistry Technician Commitment event, and Technician Commitment Signatory Events**.

We have celebrated the technical community’s contributions during events such as **Ada Lovelace Day and International Women’s Day**. **External awards and recognition for our technical staff include the Science Council Apprentice Ambassador Award and Papin Prizes**. Our technical colleagues have also **led funding bids and been recruited to external sector panels and committees**, such as the BBSRC subgroup panel of research technical specialists (RTPs) and Advance HE’s Athena Swan Governance Committee.

Participation in external professional development activities has increased, with examples including the **Executive Programme in Strategic Technical Leadership, PGCert Higher Education Global, Herschel Programme for Women in Technical Leadership**, and the **Vivien Thomas Programmes**. Our leadership in the **East Midlands regional FIRST® LEGO® League competition** has further engaged and inspired the community.

We have secured a **£1m Wellcome Institutional Funding for Research Culture award** to address precarious employment practices and provide specialist career support for researchers, including technical staff. **Over 50 micro placements for postgraduate students in technical environments** across the university have been hosted, enhancing practical experience and career development.

The inclusion of **technical staff as authors on research papers has increased**, recognising their significant contributions to academic work. We continue to support technical colleagues in **gaining recognition for their teaching and learning practice through HEA fellowships**, with an increase in the number of accredited colleagues. Our leadership and delivery of **QUEST, a pilot week-long work experience programme**, has engaged 6th form students with protected characteristics in technical careers at the university.

The examples of progress outlined above are just a few highlights of our ongoing and comprehensive efforts to support technical staff at the University of Nottingham and beyond. This work reflects our steadfast commitment to creating an environment where technical staff are valued, recognised, and offered substantial opportunities for professional growth and development.





# Case studies

## TechxFest

TechxFest 2023, held on 28 September 2023 at Derby Arena and led by the University of Nottingham in partnership with the University of Derby and former Science Minister Amanda Solloway, was a pivotal event aimed at inspiring the next generation of technicians. The event showcased a broad range of technical careers, featuring interactive stands and demonstrations from over 50 UK employers. Nearly 600 students from Year 9 and Year 10 across the Midlands attended, engaging with hands-on activities and live demonstrations that highlighted the diverse opportunities within technical fields.

Students had the chance to interact directly with industry professionals, gaining valuable insights into various career pathways. Inspirational talks and workshops provided further motivation, sharing the impact and potential of technical roles.

The event proved successful in raising awareness and generating interest in technical careers among young attendees. Feedback revealed high levels of engagement and a clearer understanding of the different opportunities available. TechxFest played a significant role in showcasing the importance of technicians and inspiring the future workforce.



## The TALENT Commission

In 2022, the Midlands Innovation Research England funded TALENT Programme, led out of this University, published the TALENT Commission – a national report that gives strategic insight into the UK's technical community. The TALENT Commission, chaired by Professor Sir John Holman, reveals the crucial role of technical skills in academia, research and innovation and outlines recommendations for the higher education and research sector. New data about skills, roles and careers of the UK's technical talent, generated by a research team at the University of Nottingham, has informed 16 overarching recommendations for employers, government, policy makers, funders, technicians, professional bodies and learned societies. The changes call for a broadening of technical career entry routes across vocational and academic pathways, greater investment



in technical careers at all levels and a move to ensure that technical staff are involved and considered in strategic decision-making processes. The research highlights the extent to which employers, professional bodies, government and funders would benefit from collaboratively implementing the proposed changes to strengthen technicians' vital role in teaching, research and development.

The University of Nottingham issued a joint statement with Midlands Innovation partner institutions – publicly committing to the enactment of the TALENT Commission recommendations. This statement sets out our collective commitment to advance the culture and environment for our technical colleagues who make such vital contributions to each of our institutions.

## UK Institute for Technical Skills & Strategy



The University of Nottingham is proud to be spearheading a groundbreaking initiative with the launch of the £5.5m UK Institute of Technical Skills and Strategy (ITSS) in August 2023. Funded by Research England, part of UK Research and Innovation, the Institute aims to strengthen the UK's position as a global leader in science, engineering, and the creative industries through the development of its technical talent. Hosted by our university and developed in collaboration with a wide network of sector stakeholders, ITSS is designed to address the critical need for enhanced technical skills and career development. It is providing insight, influencing policy, inspiring innovation, fostering integration, promoting international leadership, strengthening industry connections, to ensure the long-term sustainability of technical skills and careers. It is based on our Jubilee Campus. Our Deputy Vice-Chancellor sits of the Advisory Board – a demonstration of the University's support to this key sector initiative.

## Athena Swan



In 2023, the University of Nottingham became the first university to have achieved the Athena Swan Institutional Gold Award - the first time that an institutional Gold has been achieved by a university since the Athena Swan programme was launched in 2005. To achieve institutional Gold, the independent review panel said the university demonstrated strong evidence of success in promoting and improving gender equality institution-wide. This included our sector-wide work on visibility and gender equality for technical staff which was highlighted as beacon activity.



# The Technical Services Innovation Programme

Following the successful delivery of our previous 'Vision for Technical Talent' action plans, we are now embarking on a new and ambitious programme that will drive forward our Technician Commitment: **Technical Services Innovation Programme**.

The Technical Services Innovation Programme is dedicated to supporting and developing our vital technical community. Here we outline the key elements of our new programme, demonstrating our continued commitment to fostering an environment where technical talent is recognised, valued, and given the opportunity to thrive.

We have taken a strategic approach by focusing on 12 bold actions, aligned with the pillars of the Technician Commitment: visibility, recognition, career development, and sustainability, and the TALENT Commission recommendations. These targeted actions ensure that our initiatives are comprehensive and effective, addressing all critical aspects of support for our technical community while also promoting overall institutional efficiency.

The Technical Services (TS) Innovation Programme has been created by the University's Technical Services Managers Committee, in consultation with a number of colleagues from across the university. Its delivery is primarily led by the Technical Services leadership team, comprising the University Director of Technical Strategy and the Heads of Technical Services from the Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences and the Faculty of Science. It is guided by an institutional steering board, aligned to wider strategic institutional programmes and reports to the University's People and Culture Committee and via a dedicated University Executive Board sponsor.





# Visibility

**1. Rebranding of Technical Services job family**

Align with UKRI terminology through the rebranding of the Technical Services job family to “Technical Professionals”.

**2. Diverse representation in decision-making fora**

Ensure diverse voices and technical input in decision-making forums.

**3. Recruitment/attraction campaign**

Increase visibility of technical careers at the University of Nottingham.

# Recognition

**4. Review salaries and bandings**

Ensure competitive salaries and bandings for technical staff.

**5. Recognition of technical contributions in teaching**

Enhance recognition of technical contributions in teaching and student experience.

**6. Embed recognition in research and knowledge exchange**

Recognise technical contributions in research and knowledge exchange.

# Career pathways

**7. Reimagine career pathways**

Establish promotional progression routes for specialist technicians.

# Sustainability

**8. Strategic programme for technical talent development**

Create an institutional approach to developing early career technical talent.

**9. Consideration of technical talent in facilities planning**

Ensure facilities planning considers technical talent requirements.

**10. Appropriate costing of technical staff on external funding proposals**

Improve cost recovery, research quality, and job security for technical colleagues.

# Institutional efficiency

**11. Environmental sustainability**

Ensure that technical colleagues are equipped to deliver environmental sustainability and efficiency savings across the estate.

**12. Cross Faculty/geographical boundaries ways of working**

Explore and develop the ethos of one UoN Technical team, embedded in Faculties, but working across boundaries, ensuring equity of opportunity and full utilisation of technical talent across the organisation.





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## **Find out more**

To discover more about the development opportunities available to technical staff across the university and to learn more about the strategy and its progress, please visit

**[nottingham.ac.uk/technicians](https://nottingham.ac.uk/technicians)**