

Vision for Technical Talent



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World-class technical talent

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.



Our vision

The University of Nottingham has a diverse technical base of the highest quality in terms of skills, knowledge and expertise. Our vision is to ensure that our technical staff are world-class and that the University of Nottingham is the employer of choice for technical talent. We are committed to attracting, developing and retaining the highest-quality technicians.

This strategy has been developed to achieve this vision and deliver on our Technician Commitment. It aligns to the four key pillars of the Technician Commitment: Visibility, Recognition, Career Development and Sustainability.

The Vision for Technical Talent aligns to all seven goals of the University of Nottingham strategy:

Solving problems and improving lives: through development and delivery of technical skills and expertise to enable education, research and knowledge exchange of the highest quality

Supporting potential: through recruitment of technical colleagues with the highest potential and a desire to succeed, providing support and professional development opportunities to ensure they achieve their goals, and through the progression of our work to embed equality in our decisions about staff recruitment, reward and progression

Developing the campus experience: through ensuring high quality environments for practical teaching and technical training

Cultivating a global mindset: through deepening our global perspective and further evolving our principle of being one university with campuses in three countries, ensuring initiatives to ensure visibility, recognition career development and sustainability for the technical community are inclusive of colleagues based in the UK, Malaysia and China

Fostering creativity, discovery and experiment: through opportunities that encourage innovation, creativity and experimentation, both in technical colleagues and students and through strategic engagement with scientific and creative industries

Contributing to Sustainable Development Goals: through ensuring our technical workplaces and practical teaching and research environments are environmentally sustainable, supporting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals through our research and education

Embedding collaboration in all that we do: through our work to advance and embed the principles of the Technician Commitment across our own institution and within and beyond our sector, working with learned societies, universities, research institutes, students, funders and government to ensure that the technical profession is developed, supported, developed and aspired to

Progress

The University of Nottingham were proud to be a founding signatory of the Technician Commitment on its inception in May 2017. The Technical Services Managers Committee (TSMC) have 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.



The university's President and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Shearer West, launched the Vision for Technical Talent strategy in December 2018, along with some key headlines in terms of progress since our announcement as a signatory of the Technician Commitment in 2017. These included:

- the extension of the Technical Services job family to levels 6 and 7, in line with the University of Nottingham's Research and Teaching (R&T) and Administrative, Professional and Managerial (APM) job families
- the launch of a new Technical Skills and Conference Fund dedicated to ensuring technical colleagues can apply for funding to ensure they can continue to develop their technical skills and expertise
- the development of a new and refreshed University of Nottingham Technician Network, enabling technical colleagues across the university to access development opportunities and attend open afternoons at various facilities, laboratories and workshops across our university
- the creation of placement opportunities for technical colleagues. Technicians are able to apply to undertake technical placements of up to a week to learn new techniques and methods at universities and research institutes across the UK via a successful EPSRC Inclusion Matters award and through support from the Midlands Innovation consortium

In order to ensure regular engagement and communication with the technical community on the progress of implementing the Vision for Technical Talent strategy, the university hosted a 'Six Month In' event in June 2019 and a 'One Year In' event in 2020. These provided opportunities for colleagues to be updated on progress to date by senior leaders in the organisation.

Alongside these engagement activities, key activities aligned to the Technician Commitment include:

- Level 6 Technical Services grades (managerial and specialist) went live on 1 August 2019
- Active participation and leadership of the Midlands Innovation Technical Placement Programme launched January 2019 (UoN – 30% participation)
- UoN Technical Skills and Conference Fund launched February 2019
- Success in securing £0.5 million EPSRC funding to explore and advance Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) – a significant strand of which focuses on EDI in the technical community
- STEMM-CHANGE Project Changemaker Placement Programme launched February 2019
- Technician Sustainability Working Group launched
- A project with Digital Communications Team to raise visibility of technical staff through UoN channels including the creation of 'Technician Stories' films
- A move to ensure technical colleagues are invited to graduation ceremonies



- Leadership of a national report on how technicians support mental health and wellbeing of students (launched at the Royal Society of Chemistry on 20 June 2019)
- Leadership of the UK Higher Education Technicians Summit (2019 and 2021)
- Inclusion of technical colleagues in institutional TEF and REF submissions
- The introduction of a university-wide newsletter for technical staff across the university
- Leadership of a UK report exploring equality, diversity and inclusion in the technical community across UK higher education and research
- Work to ensure visibility of technical colleagues in university policy and guidance to ensure appropriate recognition of technicians on research outputs
- A faculty project to pilot new ways of costing technicians appropriately on research grants (piloted in the Faculty of Engineering)
- Work with HR on a recruitment campaign to attract our technical talent of the future
- Participation and coordination of Midlands Innovation provision of tailored soft skills training for technicians
- A new website dedicated to technicians nottingham.ac.uk/technicians
- The development of a technical skills database in the Faculty of Engineering, providing a roadmap of technical expertise that is searchable via the university's Technical Services website
- Success in securing a £5 million programme 'TALENT' awarded to Midlands Innovation from Research England to advance status and opportunity for the UK technical community in higher education and research
- Increased formal recognition of technical colleagues through awards such as the Vice-Chancellor's Medal and the Lord Dearing Awards
- Sector articles and blogs authored by colleagues from technical colleagues from across the institution. Examples include a piece for the Gatsby Foundation by Lola, an apprentice technician in the School of Chemistry and sector articles for Wellcome and WonkHE
- TSMC attendance and presentations at sector events including the UK Technical Managers in Universities Annual Conference, the Royal Society of Chemistry Technician Commitment event, Technician Commitment Signatory Events and the S-Lab Conference
- Visibility of the technical community in events to celebrate Ada Lovelace Day and International Women's Day

Vision for Technical Talent

Progress

Case studies

Recognition on research outputs

The university recognises the vital contributions that technical colleagues make to research and innovation and are committed to ensuring that these contributions are appropriately recognised and attributed through inclusion on research outputs including publications and patents. The University of Nottingham's recently updated Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics provides a comprehensive framework for good research conduct and the governance of all research carried out across the university, including the university's international campuses. The Code underpins the university's commitment to maintaining the highest standards of integrity, rigour and excellence in all aspects of our research and for all research to be conducted according to the appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks and standards.

The Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics now states:

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Team science is becoming increasingly common across all fields of research where research teams spanning different specialties and geographical centres and locations. The university recognises the diversity of the roles contributing to research. Therefore, in addition to meeting the requirements of the points above, an author must ensure that the work of students, research teams including technical colleagues (see 5.5.) is recognised in all publications derived from research to which they have made a contribution. Researchers should list the work of all contributors, with their permission, who do not meet the criteria for authorship in the acknowledgements section.

Section 5.5. Technical roles that contribute to research may include, but not limited to, data scientists, data engineers, archivists, informaticians, statisticians, software developers, audio-visual technologists, technical professional staff and individuals staffing core facilities, across all disciplines".

Athena SWAN

Our work to advance status and opportunity for the technical community was recognised as beacon activity in our institutional Silver Athena SWAN Award and was also a contributing factor for our Faculty of Engineering to obtain an Athena SWAN Gold Award, making it the first Engineering Faculty in the UK to achieve this.

External advocacy

Externally, our work to advance sector developments for the technical community has progressed positively since our original submission. For example, we have been active in lobbying for the inclusion of technical roles in post-Brexit immigration reforms, providing case studies to the Academies and informing the MAC review. We have led on a number of sector reports on 'hot topics' that affect and impact the technical community. These include the role of technicians in supporting student well-being and mental health, an exploration of EDI in the technical community and the impact of Covid-19 on technicians in UK higher education and research. Through the TALENT programme we are leading the UK's first policy commission on the technical community in academia and research and employ a research team here at the University of Nottingham to advance the aims of the programme. Technical colleagues at the university regularly present at external conferences and events on our work and activity to advance the technician agenda.



Vision for Technical Talent

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: A Technician Lens

In 2018 the University of Nottingham was awarded a £0.5 million grant through EPSRC's Inclusion Matters call. The project, entitled 'STEMM-CHANGE' is driving a positive change in culture and practices in EDI across Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine (STEMM). The STEMM-CHANGE programme has several linked projects that will enable a step change in approaches to promoting EDI in the workplace. It is led by a multi-disciplinary team at the University of Nottingham in collaboration with a diverse range of project partners. A significant strand of STEMM-CHANGE's activity focuses on EDI in the technical community.

STEMM-CHANGE led a sector report highlighting the equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) challenges facing technicians working in higher education. The report – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: A Technician Lens – was launched on 14 November 2018 at the STEMM-CHANGE annual conference at the Royal Society of Chemistry. For the first time, using quantitative data and qualitative findings from national workshops and presentations, the report identifies key EDI challenges and makes recommendations to institutions to advance equality for everyone working in the sector.



Covid-19

2020/21 was an unprecedented and challenging time for our university community. The technical community was at the forefront of our university's response to Covid-19, with many technical colleagues closely involved in the rapid shut down of facilities and campuses. Technicians made a significant contribution to the civic response to the pandemic, for example collating, manufacturing and distributing PPE, manufacturing hand sanitiser and enabling and supporting Covid-19 research and the national testing effort. As our campuses and facilities reopened, technical colleagues ensured a safe return to work, designing and implementing new processes and policies to ensure a safe, and socially distanced working environment for all. In order to recognise the work of technicians in response to the pandemic we led on a national survey to understand the impact of Covid-19 on the technical workforce in higher education and research. Over 1,300 responses were collected from technicians across 99 universities and research institutes from all four nations of the UK. The resulting report, 'Covid-19: The Impact on Technicians in UK Higher Education and Research' offered unprecedented insight into the impact of the pandemic on working practices for technicians and shone a light on technical contributions at an extraordinary time. The report offered a number of recommendations in order to ensure visibility, recognition and inclusion of the key roles of the technical community in the safe return to campuses to ensure all involved were fully supported.

TALENT

February 2020 saw the announcement of the £4.99 million TALENT programme, by Amanda Solloway MP, the UK's former Minister for Science, Research and Innovation as part of her first official engagement in the role. TALENT is a four-year programme centred on the development of the technical community, piloting initiatives within the Midlands Innovation partnership before sharing learnings across the whole sector. It is led by the University of Nottingham's Director of Technical Skills & Strategy in collaboration with colleagues from across Midlands Innovation.

The programme is delivering three key workstreams: a policy-based commission approach focused on investigating and providing a set of national recommendations on Technical Talent for the Future, a 'Technicians as Partners' pilot which will develop innovative ways to deliver culture change within HE to strengthen technical career opportunities, and a technical training programme which will include funding for groups of technicians across the Midlands Innovations partnership to access staff development and training to address specific skills gaps.

The following pages set out the university's Technician Commitment Action Plan.

TALENT



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We will ensure that all technicians within the organisation are identifiable and that the contribution of technicians is visible within and beyond the institution"

To ensure technical staff representation in the development of University of Nottingham's refreshed research strategy

To continue our work with the Communications and Digital Marketing teams to ensure visibility of technical colleagues and their contributions to teaching and research

To continue our work to ensure that technical support colleagues are represented on school/departmental, faculty and university level committees/boards in order that the views of technical staff are represented in decision-making processes across University of Nottingham

To include our work to develop and support technical staff in our Research Excellence Framework (REF) institutional environment statement along with Unit of Assessment submissions where appropriate

Students to have increased awareness and appreciation of technical roles at the university by featuring technical staff in future prospectuses and showcasing the expertise of technical staff at open days

Explore the inclusion of teaching qualifications of technical staff in University of Nottingham Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) returns

Establish a mentoring/buddy scheme between University of Nottingham technical staff and technical staff at our international campuses in University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus and University of Nottingham Ningbo Campus

To continue the quarterly University of Nottingham technical staff newsletter, ensuring its wider dissemination to staff across the university highlighting news, events and development opportunities for technicians

Our action plan

Recognition





We will support technicians to gain recognition through professional registration and award schemes"

To widely promote the university's updated Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics to ensure full awareness of institutional policy to ensure formal recognition for technical colleagues on research outputs.

See nottingham.ac.uk/go/fair-attribution

To appoint a designated technical staff colleague as a Professional Registration Champion for University of Nottingham, and to continue the professional registration fund that provides technical colleagues with pump-prime funding for their first year of their Professional Registration. The Professional Registration Champion will coordinate and signpost regular professional development opportunities to support professional registration

To ensure technical staff colleagues are nominated for internal and external awards schemes

To explore the possibility of sustained funding to support the continued professional registration fees of technical staff colleagues

Explore the expansion of the eligibility criteria for the supervision of student research projects to ensure that, where appropriate, technical staff can gain formal recognition for supervision roles

Celebrate and encourage the contribution of technical staff to the university's outreach/widening participation work

Our action plan

Career development



We will enable career progression opportunities for technicians through the provision of clear, documented career pathways"

To continue the delivery of the University of Nottingham Technical Skills and Conference Fund – a fund to support to ensure technical colleagues can apply for dedicated funding to facilitate their attendance at appropriate courses and conferences to ensure they can continue to develop their technical skills and expertise. See nottingham.ac.uk/technicians/professionaldevelopment/technical-skills-conference-fund

To promote and encourage engagement with the Midlands Innovation TALENT programme suite of professional development opportunities mitalent.ac.uk

To continue to promote the inclusion of technical staff as investigators or named researchers on internal and external research funding applications where funding bodies allow

To ensure the agreed expansion of the Technical Services Job Family as part of the institutional review of Level 7 roles

Develop technical tutor/technical teaching fellow roles within the technical job family to ensure skilled, teaching focused technical roles with a clearly defined career path and associated development opportunities

To continue to develop our work with the University of Nottingham Leadership and Management Academy (LMA) to ensure clearly defined career pathways for technical staff complete with links to relevant training provision

Explore possible models of progression routes based on the development of technical skills in relation to teaching and/or research

Our action plan

Sustainability





We will enable the future sustainability of technical skills across our organisation, ensuring that technical expertise is fully utilised"

To roll out the grant costing pilot (initiated in the University of Nottingham's Faculty of Engineering) across the institution, ensuring clear guidance to ensure appropriate costing of technician time, equipment and facility charges so the full costs associated with technical staff and research are quantified

To roll out the technical skills database piloted and created in University of Nottingham's Faculty of Engineering across the institution

To develop an institutional approach to building our technical talent of the future, through apprenticeships, T-Level placements and trainee programmes with increased join up across faculties, schools and departments

To enact our Vision for Technical Talent we commit to additional actions to advance the key themes of the Technician Commitment:

To continue the now established Technical Services Managers Committee (TSMC), maintaining ownership of this Action Plan and clear lines of communication to the University's Executive Board

To continue to develop the technical staff network to promote networking across the institution and cross faculty development opportunities (regular technical seminars/events) and sharing best practice and leveraging the world-class skills offered by our technical staff across the university

Professional Registration/Accreditation to be embedded in recruitment processes for technical positions as a desirable recruitment expectation

To continue to advance Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) across the university's technical community, aligned with the wider University of Nottingham EDI strategy, University of Nottingham Race Equality Charter and Athena SWAN action plans

University of Nottingham Malaysia and University of Nottingham Ningbo representatives on the University of Nottingham's Technical Managers committee

To align our Technician Commitment activity with University of Nottingham's engagement with the Researcher Concordat and the newly rebranded Researcher Academy

To continue to develop relationships with higher education institutions and stakeholders and influence sector wide activity regarding technicians to ensure the University of Nottingham is at forefront of sector/policy developments

To continue to attract external recognition and funding for technician development related projects

In collaboration with Midlands Innovation – to successfully deliver the Research England funded TALENT programme of work to advance status and opportunity for the technical community in UK HE and research





nottingham.ac.uk/technicians