Technician Commitment Action Plan 2024-2027

[The Technician Commitment](#) is a university and research institution initiative, led by a steering board of sector bodies, hosted by the [UK Institute for Technical Skills & Strategy.](#) The Commitment aims to ensure visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability for technicians working in higher education and research, across all disciplines. Universities and research institutes are invited to become signatories of the Technician Commitment and pledge action to tackle the key challenges affecting their technical staff.

The University of St. Andrews is a signatory of the commitment and has developed the 2024-2027 Action Plan to build on previous work directed by the 2018 and 2021 Action Plans. Actions are designed to be SMART, however, we also recognise that some actions focus on necessary process or cultural changes which do not have an easily quantifiable outcome. Some metrics require initial baselining to test assumptions around the current state of play and, where feasible, a baselining exercise will be conducted in academic year 2024-2025.

The 2024-2027 Action Plan was developed by a short-term working group of Technical and Professional Services staff, formed in March 2024. A new internal governance body, the Technical Professional Development Committee, a subsidiary of will become custodians of the Action Plan from October 2024. Members will broaden consultation with staff around the priority actions identified and have reserved powers to review, evaluate and publish iterations of the action plan throughout its lifespan.

The University of St Andrews Technician Commitment Action Plan, 2024-2027

VISIBILITY						
TC Descriptor: Ensure that all technicians within the organisation are identifiable and that the contribution of technicians is visible within and beyond the institution						
Vision for the University St. Andrews A Technical services approach which articulates the value created by technical staff and fosters interdisciplinary collaboration within the university of St Andrews and beyond. The voice of technical professionals influences and shapes strategic decision making at all levels.						
TCAP Reference	**Action & Objective**	**Rationale**	**Activities & Output**	**Timescale**	**Responsibility**	**Outcomes**
1	Launch staff, equipment, and licencing public database	There is an absence of publicly available information regarding key contacts, equipment, skills and licenced professionals within the university. This limits opportunities for effective communication, interdisciplinary collaboration and career progression across schools and units.	1. Design Database structure and maintenance policy for approval by the Technical Professional Development Committee 2. Promotion of the database for voluntary contributions 3. Published database available to all internal staff 4. Ongoing monitoring process implemented	Jul-25	Organisational Development Specialist (Research), OSDS Technical Professional Development Sub-Committee	1. Increased awareness of key information 2. Increase in collaborations instigated by the database

2	Enable technical staff to influence decision making at strategic levels	The working group noted that previous TC initiatives had increased visibility within the research community, with technical representation on the Research, Impact and Innovation Committee (RIIC). There is limited involvement for technical staff on similar strategic groups across education, business transformation projects and sustainability.	1. Written proposal on the benefits of consultation with technical staff, tailored to priority topics. 2. Statement and offer to present shared to chairs of priority committees 3. Participation supported and championed through communications channels.	Jul-27	Technical Professional Development Sub-Committee	1. Technical Representation on the Education Strategic Management Group (ESMG) and the Learning & Teaching committees or associated working groups. 2. Technical Representation on the Environmental Sustainability Board (ESB) or associated working groups 3. Technical Representation on the Business Transformation Board or associated project boards 4. Technical Representation on School/Unit senior management boards or associated working groups
3	Update Technician Commitment Website	This action is carried over from the 2021 action plan. The working group commented that the existing site contained out of date information and seemed geared to explain the Technician Commitment to external users, rather than for internal staff. A refreshed web presence will help increase the visibility of technical staff, their work and the support available through the university.	1. Website specification shared with IT 2. User Acceptance Testing (UAT) group formed 3. MVP developed and tested with UAT group 4. New website published	Jan-25	Organisational Development Specialist (Research), OSDS	1. Increased active engagement with Technical-focussed web-content 2. Increased web-based conversions to Technical focussed services e.g. training, events and network subscriptions

RECOGNITION

TC Descriptor:

Support technicians to gain recognition through professional registration and external awards schemes

Vision for the University St. Andrews

Technical staff are recognised as an asset and not a cost. Their work across education, research and leadership is acknowledged, credited appropriately and celebrated.

TCAP 2427 Reference	Action & Objective	Rationale	Activities & Output	Timescale	Responsibility	Outcomes
5	Publish Fair Attribution and Acknowledgement policy	This action has been carried over from both the 2018 and 2021 action plans.

The working group highlighted their frustration at the lack of progress in this area and that the University of St Andrews is falling behind other institutions who have successfully implemented fair attribution policies.

Consistently applied recognition for contributions to research will enable career progression opportunities and enhance our research culture. | 1. Ensure Technicians are represented on the *'short life working group: Recognising contributions to research'*
2. Pilot and phase adoption in schools, where appropriate
3. Publish policy on university website and share with all staff
4. Embed policy into Research Staff induction and PI training. | Jan-26 | Head of Research Governance, Policy and Integrity | 1. Increased authorship from Technical Professionals on Research Outputs
2. Increase in acknowledgement of technical services provision within body of published research outputs |

6	Pilot Technical Staff Awards Night	An awards event will help raise the profile of technical professionals across the university.	1. Establish working group to review existing awards across the institution, design the award categories, nomination process and winner criteria 2. Promote nominations and applications from across the university 3. Design and deliver an awards night event	Jul-27	Organisational Development Specialist (Research), OSDS Corporate Communications	1. Institutional commitment to fund the event on an annual basis
7	Encourage and incentivise external award applications	The working group feel that the time and resource required to identify and apply for an external reward is a barrier and that additional support is needed. There is a need to articulate and recognise the value of external awards for technical staff across the institution.	1. Identify and publicise award opportunities through appropriate comms channels 2. Explore appropriate incentives to encourage award applications with Rewards Manager, HR 3. Share best practice examples and guidance for writing award applications 4. Enable access to writing development and support initiatives incl. writing retreats and power hour sessions.	Jul-27	Organisational Development Specialist (Research), OSDS	1. At least 3 applications submitted per annum 2. 2x Awards granted
8	Review policies related to workload principles and overtime to ensure coverage for technical staff	The working group believe that expectations around out-of-hours working, or additional responsibilities are applied inconsistently across the university for technical staff.	1. Review relevant policies to assess barriers to adoption for technical staff 2. Revise policies, (if required) 3. Promote policies to relevant stakeholders incl. line managers of technical staff	Oct-25	Director of HR	1. Increased awareness of relevant policies 2. Increase in novel queries to HR regarding workload and overtime requests from technical staff

CAREER DEVELOPMENT						
TC Descriptor: Enable career progression opportunities for technicians through the provision of clear, documented career pathways						
Vision for the University St. Andrews A technical services role at the university is attractive, compensated fairly and offers flexible career pathways that align with the ambitions of our workforce. We recruit competent and knowledgeable staff and support them to develop as people and professionals.						
TCAP 2427 Reference	**Action & Objective**	**Rationale**	**Activities & Output**	**Timescale**	**Responsibility**	**Outcomes**
9	Widen access to Education, Research and Leadership training for technical staff	The working group highlighted that it is not always clear what existing professional development provision is available or suitable for technical staff	1. Review course library and assess content 2. Revise course materials to be more inclusive for technical staff, if required 3. Revise marketing strategy to increase awareness of provision to technical staff 4. Provision gap analysis completed, and action plan developed	Jul-25	Head of OSDS	1. Increased registrations from Technical Professionals in OSDS Courses 2. 30% of existing courses made accessible to technical staff
10	Feasibility analysis for Head of Technical Services Post (Grade 8)	An institutional or faculty of science-wide role would provide strategic oversight of the development of technical teams, services, and facilities.	1. Working group established 2. Consultation process across units 3. Feasibility analysis completed and shared with key stakeholders 4. Advertise and recruit post-holder, if required	Jul-26	Organisational Design & Change Specialist	Institutional reporting structure for technical staff created

11	Implement multi-stream career progression framework	This action has been carried over from the 2021 action plan. The lack of opportunities for progression was highlighted as a fundamental challenge to attracting and retaining talent. A flexible career progression framework, which recognises specialisms in Education, Research and Management is needed.	1. Review and contextualise the HETT Framework, including the introduction of an institution/faculty of science-wide Head of Technical Services 2. Business case produced and approved by relevant stakeholders 3. Progression criteria written 4. Consultation process delivered and consensus found 5. Framework implemented institution-wide	Jul-27	Organisational Design & Change Specialist Director of HR	1. Framework adopted institution-wide 2. Staff evidenced progressing through the framework
12	Develop an Apprentice Support Network	The working group emphasised the value of Apprentices building a community of practice and having exposure to the various technical career options available within higher education.	1. Create a dedicated web hub for Technical apprentices 2. Create a dedicated Microsoft teams channel 3. Event series designed and delivered	Jan-25	Organisational Development Specialist (Research), OSDS	1. Increased job satisfaction from apprentice staff
13	Protect professional development time for technical staff	There is an inconsistent approach to professional development for technical staff across units. Smaller academic schools are often unable to provide sufficient cover to support technical staff to develop.	1. Include technical staff in a holistic review of protected professional development time for all job families 2. Publicise commitment	Jul-27	Director of HR HR Policy Officer	1. Alignment of personal development commitment with academic & research job families
14	Promote Career Development opportunities and job vacancies (internally and externally)	The working group noted that staff would benefit from consistent communications around training, funding opportunities and job vacancies	1. Develop process guide for OSDS administrators to curate and share relevant information 2. Pilot a summary email/newsletter	Jan-25	Organisational Development Specialist (Research), OSDS	1. Online jobs board updated monthly 2. All internal and external development opportunities are promoted within at least 4 weeks of their start date.

| 15 | Enhanced induction process for technical staff | The working group commented on the challenges facing new starts to the university and that core information can be difficult to locate. | 1. Review management training course to ensure the importance of induction and staff onboarding is covered
2. Develop dedicated induction guidance for technical staff | Jul-25 | Organisational Development Specialist (Research), OSDS | 1. Increased satisfaction with institution-wide induction processes
2. Increased understanding of induction processes for managers of technical staff |

SUSTAINABILITY

TC Descriptor:

Ensure the future sustainability of technical skills across the organisation and that technical expertise is fully utilised.

Vision for the University St. Andrews

Technical staff can evidence and champion their contribution towards institutional objectives. Technical expertise is fully utilised, and staff are empowered to maximise their potential through knowledge transfer and entrepreneurial activities.

TCAP 2427 Reference	Action & Objective	Rationale	Activities & Output	Timescale	Responsibility	Outcomes
16	Design dedicated Technical Staff objectives and success metrics linked to the University strategies	Emphasising the vital contribution of technical staff towards strategic objectives can build a business case for further investment in technical staff.	1. Working group established to design provisional objectives and success metrics. 2. Presentation delivered to senior management 3. Objectives published and progress updated annually	Jul-27	Principal's Office Technical Professional Development Committee	1. Increased awareness of contribution towards institutional objectives by technical staff and Senior Management
17	Support technical staff to disseminate specialist knowledge locally, nationally, and internationally	The university is committed to building sustainable, funded collaborations and to enhance the impact and communication of its research as part of its World Leading strategic theme.	1. Best practice sharing coordinated at in-person events and through online channels.	Jul-26	Organisational Development Specialist (Research), OSDS	1. 2x conference speakers from technical job family per annum

		Technical staff should form part of this strategy.	2. Access to training and development opportunities on knowledge transfer and public engagement 3. Communications to managers of technical staff emphasising the value of knowledge transfer activities			2. Increase in authorship of research outputs.
18	Review the recruitment assessment processes for technical staff	A customised approach to attracting and assessing technical talent will enable career progression across units and greater confidence in succession planning initiatives.	1. Process guide developed for the advertisement across technical roles and disciplines, to maximise exposure. 2. Calibration of interview & practical assessments across post-titles and units.	Jul-27	Director of HR	1. Increased satisfaction for hiring managers on the recruitment and promotion process
19	Produce best practice guidelines for asset management	Support to empower technical staff to deliver best-practice maintenance of technical equipment and lab spaces will increase the longevity of equipment	1. Working group established 2. Unit-level guidance collected and reviewed for ideation. 3. Guidance published and shared on internal networks.	Jul-27	Technical Professional Development Sub-Committee	1. Increased awareness of asset management principles by technology owners
20	Review charging mechanisms for internal technical services support	Internal charges for technical support have remained static and need reviewed. This limits the revenue generating power of technicians for their unit.	1. Working group established 2. Review conducted and revised proposal produced, including commitment to ongoing reviews.	Jul-27	VP for Research, Innovation and Collections Heads of Schools across the faculty of science	1. Increased income generated by Technical Staff at unit level

			3. Revised charging mechanism and review process implemented.			
21	Feasibility analysis of an institution-wide research grant allocation policy	A consistent approach to research grant funding allocation for technical staff and resources (equipment, spaces) to create an accurate representation of technical staff contributions.	5. Working group established 6. Consultation process across units 7. Feasibility analysis published 8. Policy developed and published, if required.	Jul-27	Organisational Development Specialist (Research), OSDS	1. Increased grant funding allocation for Technical Professionals within funding applications

Complementary Activities

People Strategy 2023-2027

The People Strategy has been developed in the context of our values, our commitment to social responsibility, and an evolving operating environment including a highly competitive labour market, different and evolving skills requirements, technological change, and changing employee expectations. Against that backdrop, we have identified five key strategic priorities which are critical to delivery of the University Strategy:

- Attracting our People
- Developing our People
- Valuing our People
- Supporting our People
- Leading and Planning for our People

The Technician Commitment 2024-2027 Action Plan aligns with the ambitions of the People Strategy in several ways, including (but not limited to):

- Create clearly defined **career pathways** with structures for development and progression from entry-level to senior leadership roles, with an initial and phased focus on professional services staff.
- Develop mechanisms to engender a **culture of learning** that encourages and empowers staff to take responsibility for their own professional development and provides them with the time and tools to do so.
- Develop a **reward strategy** to reward people fairly within transparent and appropriate remuneration frameworks.
- Commission a strategic review of **workforce planning** to consider future workforce needs (roles, skills, etc) and how they might be fulfilled.

Athena Swan

The Athena Swan Charter is a framework which is used across the globe to support and transform gender equality within higher education (HE) and research. Established in 2005 to encourage and recognise commitment to advancing the careers of women in science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine (STEMM) employment, the Charter is now being used across the globe to address gender equality more broadly, and not just barriers to progression that affect women.

The 2024 Silver Award Action Plan is focussed on the following priority areas:

1. Increasing Representation of Women in the Professoriate and Senior Roles

2. Supporting Professional Services Staff Career Pathways

3. Addressing Intersectional Inequalities

4. Ensuring Sustainable Workloads

5. Closing the Gender Pay Gap

The following actions directly align with priorities identified under the Technician Commitment 2024-2027 Action Plan and the Technical Professional Development Committee will work closely with key stakeholders to amplify

Priority 2: Supporting Professional Services Staff Career Pathways

Rationale: PS women are over-represented in lower grades (55% of women at G1-4; 46%M) and under-represented at higher grades (12% of women at G7-9; 19%M).

Success Measure
By 2028 we will have:
- increased the proportion of women occupying PS roles at G7-9 to match men (Baseline 12%F; 19%M)
- reduced the gender imbalance in applications for re-grading at each grade to no more than +/- 5% (Baseline +/- X%)

Action & Objective	Rationale	Activities & Output	Timescale	Responsibility	Outcomes
Develop career pathways for professional services staff to support progression opportunities and recognise excellent performance	• In contrast to academics, progression for PS staff requires role regrading or moving post (Section 3.2) • This was a source of notable dissatisfaction in both PSC and AS	▪ Establish a working group to look at career pathways for PS staff and ways in which progression might be better supported (e.g. more	April 2026 – May 2027	Director of HR	o Increase the percentage of PS women occupying G7-9 roles to 16% (Baseline 12% 2022)

	focus groups both in terms of the disparity between academic and PS roles and the ability to reward high performance • Women are more likely than men to progress at lower grades and less likely to progress at higher grades and all grades except 2 and 7, men are more likely than women to apply for regrading • PS women are less likely to agree that the University recognises good performance appropriately than PS men (29%W:39%M)	opportunities for secondments and job swaps) ▪ Develop a competency framework detailing the skills required at different levels in different roles ▪ Explore different ways in which excellent performance can be recognised ▪ Establish a PS Forum to provide opportunities to network and provide a voice for PS staff within the University ▪ Develop a set of FAQs on the regrading process *Outputs:* ➢ Competency framework ➢ PS Forum ➢ Mechanisms to recognise excellent performance ➢ FAQs on regrading process			o Increase in PS women agreeing that the University recognises good performance appropriately (Baseline 29%) with no more than 2 percentage point difference between PS men and women.
Extend eligibility for Aurora programme to Grade 5 professional services staff to support women into higher grades and roles	• An in-house evaluation highlighted the value of Aurora in building confidence and supporting career progression • It also highlighted the value of completing the programme at earlier career stages • Extending participation in Aurora to G5 women aspiring to G6 and above will help develop a pipeline of diverse leaders	▪ Reserve 20% of places for PS G5 staff ▪ Hold annual 'Introduction to Aurora' session to promote benefits of participation to G5 staff *Outputs:* ➢ Annual Introduction to Aurora event	April 2025 – June 2025	Head of OSDS	o At least 20% of places on the Aurora programme offered to PS G5 staff over period 2024/5-2028/9 o Enhanced development opportunities for G5 staff
Increase mentoring provision for Grade 7 and above professional services women to support	• An in-house evaluation of Aurora indicated that some participants felt they were too advanced for the programme content	▪ Review current mentoring provision for G7 and above PS staff to identify gaps	April 2025 – June 2026	Head of OSDS	o Increase the percentage of PS women occupying G7-9 roles to 16% (Baseline 12.2% 2022)

women into more senior grades and enhance peer networks and support	• In addition, the PS Leadership focus group highlighted the lack of an equivalent scheme to EG for PS women • While the proportion of PS women at G9 have increased (from 33.3% in 2016 to 39.4% in 2022), focus groups highlighted a perceived gender hierarchy arising from informal networks that created barriers to inclusion and progression for women • The increase in women in the professoriate points to the effectiveness of mentoring and networks in supporting women's career development	▪ Explore scope to extend EG to PS staff and the pros and cons of doing so ▪ Create and promote new / extended provision to support G7 and above PS staff *Outputs:* ➢ New / extended mentoring scheme			o At least 30% of PS G7-9 staff have participated in a mentoring scheme by 2028 (baseline data to be gathered)
Revise the Review and Development Scheme (RDS) form and guidance to facilitate a focused and recorded discussion of future career plans and aspirations (including progression and leadership roles)	• The RDS provides a mechanism for a focused discussion on career plans and aspirations allowing line managers to both encourage and be aware of staff career ambitions • AS focus groups have revealed differential experiences of the RDS and completion • Reviewing the process and guidance along with training for line managers will help raise awareness of its importance among line managers • Central monitoring of completion rates will encourage uptake	▪ Establish short-life working group to determine how form and guidance might be improved ▪ Develop bite sized training for line managers on effective career development conversations ▪ Monitor RDS completion rates centrally *Outputs:* ➢ Revised form and guidance ➢ Bite size training provision	September 2025 – December 2026	Director of HR	o 95% RDS completion by 2028 (baseline data to be gathered for 2024/25)

Priority 4: Ensuring Sustainable Workloads

Action & Objective	Rationale	Activities & Output	Timescale	Responsibility	Outcomes
Develop new tools to support sustainable workloads	• Academic staff, and academic women in particular, expressed least satisfaction in SS2021 on workloads and work-life balance • Seeking ways to streamline delivery of administration and teaching activities, without negatively impacting quality is central to maintaining student experience whilst ensuring realistic workloads for academic women, particularly those with caring responsibilities	▪ Undertake a survey of staff in Schools to identify opportunities to streamline the delivery and administration of teaching (combined with survey in Action 16) ▪ Pilot a workload impact assessment (WIA) for substantive education policy changes and new service leadership roles to better understand the resource implications ▪ Develop a workload reduction toolkit for Schools to identify opportunities to streamline working practices and free up academics' time ▪ Review and update flexiquette guidance to include email etiquette, office hours, core working hours and uninterrupted time *Outputs:* ➤ WIA toolkit	July 2026 – June 2027	Vice-Principal Education (Proctor); Vice-Principal People and Diversity	o Increase the percentage of academic women who view their workload as sustainable to at least 55% (Baseline 43% 2021), with men and women equally satisfied (+/-2 percentage points, baseline -11 percentage points)

		➢ Workload reduction toolkit ➢ Revised flexiquette guidance			