

## Technician Commitment: Renewal Self-Assessment & Action Plan Guidance

*Please note: This guidance and template is intended for institutions who have already submitted their Initial Self-Assessment & Action Plan 12-18 months after becoming an official signatory of the Technician Commitment. This guidance and template is for **renewal** of ongoing self-assessment and action plans which are submitted every three years.*

The Technician Commitment aims to ensure visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability for technicians working in higher education and research, across all disciplines.

The renewal stage of self-assessment and action planning process asks for reflection on past action plans, evidence of progress and engagement and a further 36 month action plan. The self-assessment includes a 'RAG' analysis of previous action plans - a 'Red, Amber & Green' status report.

The Technician Commitment does not seek to dictate how organisations promote a positive culture for the technician community. This is a matter for autonomous institutions and the technician, research and academic community to agree. It is expected that as a minimum, signatories publicly state their Technician Commitment signatory status and institutional action plans on a dedicated and discoverable webpage, along with their named point of contact. The Technician Commitment asks signatories to evidence that the 'technician voice' is present in the development and formation of institutional action plans. The Technician Commitment is a collaborative endeavour and will support and facilitate the establishment and sharing of best practice demonstrated in the self-assessments and action plans. A vibrant community of institutional leads tasked with implementing the Technician Commitment is continually developing and the Steering Board aims to ensure a range of forums are available to enable peers to share expertise, good practice and experiences.

Cross referencing to other sector institutional reviews relevant to technicians is welcomed; for example, the Technician Commitment are keen to learn how signatories are advancing equality, diversity and inclusion for the technical community and institutions may wish to reference Athena SWAN and Race Equality Charter submissions. The Technician Commitment are also keen to learn of Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) submissions and Research Excellence Framework (REF) environment/People, Culture and Environment statements where technicians have been explicitly mentioned. The Steering Board are particularly keen to see activity and plans to enact the recommendations of the TALENT Commission embedded in renewed self-assessments and action plans.

Please note that finalised Action Plans should be signed off at an institutional leadership level (e.g. Vice-Chancellor/President/Director level). Kindly export this completed form (and any appendices) as a single .pdf file titled **Institution Name/Month/Year of Submission**. There are two submission windows per year – end of January and end of July every year.

For any additional queries, please contact [tc@itss.org.uk](mailto:tc@itss.org.uk).

Technician Commitment Renewal Self-Assessment & Action Plan

Evaluating Impact through Self-Assessment & Future Action Planning

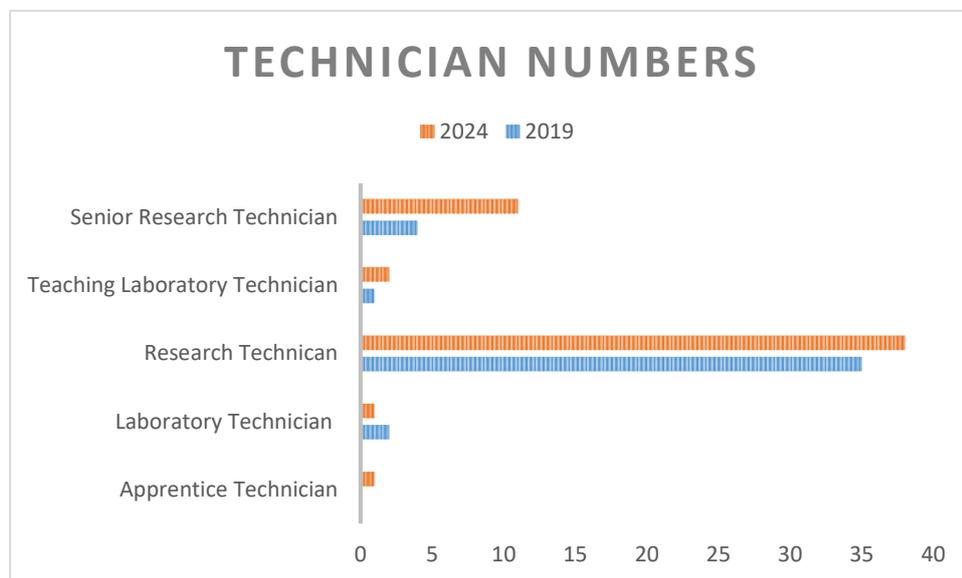
Organisation: **Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine**

Name of Institutional Lead: **Kyle Walker**

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1. Please provide an overview of technical staff structures in your organisation, along with details of any changes since signing the Technician Commitment.

The graph below shows changes to the number of technicians employed by LSTM from 2019 to 2024



The total number of technicians has increased by 26% since 2019 from 42 to 53. Notably, the number of technicians in roles classed as ‘senior’ has increased over this time from 4 to 11 (125% increase). This is a substantial increase both in real terms and also relative to the total number of technicians (10 % in 2019 versus 20 % in 2024). The technician committee have no doubt that this improvement in career development and recognition has benefited from our involvement with the technician commitment.

2. Please provide an overview of the governance, leadership and reporting lines of the Technician Commitment at your institution, along with details on how it is resourced, and information on how your organisation has engaged with the wider community within and beyond your institution. How has this developed since you became a signatory?

At LSTM, leadership on delivering the Technician Commitment action plan comes from the committee of the Technical Forum. This is a voluntary committee that consists of technicians from across the school. The committee is structured as follows:

Chair: Kyle Walker

Co-chair: Emma Reid

Committee Members: Patricia Pignatelli, Faisal Ashraf, Ashlee Braithwaite

Previously, the Technical Forum was more informally led by a small number of technicians. However, by introducing a formal committee (Technician Committee), we have ensured that all members of staff are clear on a point of contact for dissemination of information relevant to technicians. The committee is also better placed to collaborate with other entities at the institution to organise technician-related events, and ensure technicians are involved in discussions on institution-wide matters.

Members of the Technical Forum are well embedded within other groups and committees across the institution. This includes CaDRe (Career Development of Researchers), ECR Group (Early Career Researchers), Lab Users Group, Sustainability and Environment, LGBTQ+ Network, AWERB (Animal Welfare Ethical Review Board), and the Biological Safety Committee. Technicians are also represented on PACE (Professional and Career Development Group) by Sarah Roberts acting as an Executive sponsor. This is a marked improvement on technician representation from before LSTM became a signatory of the Technician Commitment.

In the wider community, Technical Forum members have attended outreach events including at schools, museums and festivals. The Technician Committee has also strengthened ties with technical groups at other institutions through the North West Technician Network. This is a network of Technician Commitment leads from institutions across the North West that meets regularly once a month. These meetings have enabled knowledge exchange between the institutions as well as opening up potential collaboration opportunities including visits between institutions.

Currently, the Technical Forum meets 6 times a year with email discussions taking place regularly between committee members, as well as in person committee meetings when required. The committee chair then feeds back relevant information to CaDRe, who meet every other month.

From June 2024 onwards, the reporting structure will be altered so that the Technician Committee reports directly to Research Committee. This will increase the visibility of the Technician Committee's work to senior staff.

Additionally, with responsibilities being amended in the near future for some roles, the inclusion of a core funded staff member to implement the action plan and other activities relating to the Technician Commitment will be considered.

3. Please provide a Red, Amber, Green (RAG) analysis on your institutional 36-month action plan indicating which activities you have undertaken and completed (green), which are in progress (amber) and which are still to be carried out (red). Please provide an explanation for those categorised as red. This may be detailed here or attached to this document as an appendix.

Our RAG analysis is attached as a separate submission document.

4. Please provide evidence that your previous action plans are having impact. (For example, you may wish to provide links to initiatives, websites, testimonials, articles/blogs).

The following news story was published on the LSTM website following our most recent technician appreciation day in September 2023. This improved visibility of the day as well as acting as a reminder of the work that technicians contribute to LSTM.

<https://www.lstmed.ac.uk/news-events/news/lstm-celebrates-vital-role-of-technicians-in-delivering-world-class-research>

The following news story published on the LSTM website outlines significant funding awarded to a technician. This funding allowed them to receive comprehensive training, enhancing their CV and specific knowledge within LSTM. This shows that technicians are not only being encouraged to apply for funding opportunities but that applications are fairly considered. This particular funding award is specifically for technicians and ECRs, and runs annually.

<https://www.lstmed.ac.uk/news-events/news/lstm-announces-recipients-of-inaugural-paul-bedingfield-prize-in-global-health>

The following news story published on the LSTM website shows the involvement of technicians in outreach activities. One technician demonstrated taking blood smears from individuals infected with malaria. The increased involvement of technicians in outreach activities gives us the chance to emphasise the importance of technical roles as well as encouraging those who are interested in technical roles to pursue a technical career.

<https://www.lstmed.ac.uk/news-events/news/liverpool-school-of-tropical-medicine-showcases-scientific-illustrations-stories>

The following news story was published on the LSTM website following our first technician appreciation day in 2022. This event was centred around skills-sharing, whereby a selection of technicians demonstrated a technique they specialise in to fellow technicians and wider staff. This was beneficial to both those demonstrating (practicing and improving teaching skills), and the audience (learning new skills). These events also allowed the wider LSTM staff to better understand the hard work that technicians do, and our importance to the institution.

<https://www.lstmed.ac.uk/news-events/news/lstm-has-been-celebrating-the-wonderful-work-of-our-early-career-researchers-ecrs>

5. Please provide details of how your institution is enacting the recommendations of the TALENT Commission (<https://www.mitalent.ac.uk/theTALENTcommission>).

To Outline how LSTM is enacting the recommendations of the TALENT Commission, we have addressed the following recommendation points directly:

**Point 1** – *“Employers of technical staff, funders, and government departments (e.g. BEIS, DfE) should employ a strategic approach to ensure the sustainability and appropriateness of technical skills and careers, at both a local and national level.”* **LSTM has a robust redeployment process, with hiring staff encouraged to consider redeployment of current staff on contracts that are near ending. Additionally, HR share upcoming posts internally with those staff who have less than 6 months remaining on their contracts, so staff are aware of opportunities.**

**Point 2** – *“Funders and employers of technical staff in higher education and research should recognise the blurring of boundaries between technical and academic roles. They should provide opportunities and mechanisms to move between career pathways and across sectors.”* **At LSTM, ECRs (Early Career Researchers) are defined as “research staff on fixed term or permanent subject to funding contracts”. This definition is inclusive of technicians as well as more traditional early academic roles. The inclusivity of this definition allows engagement of technicians with the more traditional ECR community, particularly with ECR organised academic events. Staff can move between ‘research’ and ‘technical’ career pathways and there are several examples of research technicians being promoted into research assistant roles**

**Point 3** – *“Employers of technical staff, funders, and sector bodies (e.g. professional associations and learned societies) should support outreach and public engagement activities regarding technical careers in local schools and colleges to increase visibility of technical career opportunities to young people.”* **Following outreach, LSTM has supported students through the In2Science UK programme (10 in 2023 and 17 in 2024). This programme is free for 16-19 year olds, and consists of an in-person work experience placement, live online workshops and events. During this time students gain hands-on STEM experience to expand their personal and professional skills and are hopefully inspired to pursue a career in STEM. In the vast majority of cases, the students work alongside technicians and are therefore introduced to the possible career paths that technical roles offer in STEM. This is also a great opportunity for current technicians to gain experience in teaching and supervising.**

**Point 4** – *“Employers of technical staff should broaden access to technical careers in the sector by utilising and expanding entry routes to include both vocational and academic pathways.”* **While LSTM has previously welcomed speakers from outside the institution to discuss career pathways in industry, this is something that could be done on a more regular basis. In 2023 we employed our first Level 3 apprentice technician at LSTM and this is a scheme we hope to expand further in the future to wide participation.**

**Point 5** – *“Employers of technical staff should ensure inclusion of technical expertise within end-to-end recruitment processes when hiring for technical roles.”* **This is not yet routinely adopted in recruitment but there are examples of where technicians have been fully involved, end-to end, in the recruitment process technical staff. We will seek to learn lessons from these examples and embed example of good practice in our recruitment processes. .**

**Point 6** – *“Employers of technical staff, funders, and government departments (e.g. BEIS, DfE) should employ a strategic approach to ensure the sustainability and appropriateness of technical skills and careers, at both a local and national level”* **LSTM is currently reviewing laboratory management**

across the organisation and looking at ways of moving towards shared technical platforms. This will provide opportunities for career development and retention of technical staff specialised in running these platforms.

**Point 7** – *“Employers of technical staff should ensure visibility of clearly defined career pathways and progression routes, with accurate and standardised job descriptions for technical roles”* LSTM has a clearly defined regrade process which provides opportunities for vertical progression. Further work is needed in developing standardised job descriptions for different grades, and in defining criteria needed for career progression via the technical career pathway. .

**Point 8** – *“Employers of technical staff should form partnerships with organisations and initiatives that provide technical and vocational training (e.g. Catapult Centres in the UK and Institutes of Technology in England) to ensure sharing of knowledge and skills, to facilitate the identification of skills needed to deploy emerging technologies, and to inform the development of suitable future training syllabi.”* LSTM has recently joined the North West Technician’s Network, which should increase opportunities like this. We recognise this is one way in which we can improve.

**Point 9** – *“Technical staff should engage positively with current and future opportunities that are available to them.”* Whilst we believe that engagement of technical staff with the opportunities LSTM presents is high, we must make more efforts going forward to quantify this.

**Point 10** – *“Employers of technical staff, funding bodies, and learned societies should undertake targeted and specific action to address the equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) challenges facing the technical community.”* LSTM has several committees, networks, and working groups that are dedicated to addressing equality, diversity and inclusion. These include the Equality & Inclusion Committee, Athena Swan Self-assessment Team, BAME Network, LGBTQ+ Network, and the Disability and Carers Network. These groups encompass all LSTM staff and so address the EDI challenges facing technical staff. LSTM currently holds the Athena Swan silver award and plans to apply for the Race Equity Charter in 2025.

**Point 11** – *“Employers of technical staff, publishers and other sector bodies (e.g. professional associations and learned societies) should ensure the contributions of technical staff are visible and recognised.”* LSTM sponsors annual Technician Appreciation Days . These days have been held in September from 2022 onwards and will be an annual occasion going forward. These events are publicised throughout the school and all staff are encouraged to consider technical staff contributions during this time. Throughout the year, technical staff information is visible on the LSTM website, though we recognise this information needs to be updated more regularly, and technical profiles should also be linked to relevant group/ project pages. Additionally, LSTM has a clear publication policy, which means technicians are aware of what is required to be included on publications. This has led to many technicians building their publication record whilst at LSTM.

**Point 12** – *“Employers of technical staff should collect, report and analyse data on their technical workforce, with careful consideration of those roles at the interface with academic roles. To enable sector level understanding, a new, simple, and fit-for-purpose classification for technical roles should be developed.”* In 2023, LSTM participated in the CEDAR (Culture, Environment and Development in Academic Research) survey. The survey was aimed at research staff and managers of researchers and gathered anonymous data about the research environment, working conditions, career aspirations and professional development opportunities for those conducting research. The results will be categorised and filtered to consider only the answers supplied by those who

identify as technical staff. Over the next 12 months we plan to work towards clearer definitions of career pathways for technical staff, utilising the information available via ITSS.

**Point 13** – *“Fundlers and employers of technical staff should provide clear and consistent guidance to ensure technical contributions are costed appropriately and eligibility requirements for existing funding opportunities should be reviewed to ensure inclusion of technical staff where appropriate”* **As part of our plans to move towards shared technical platforms we will be working on costing models for building in technicianal expertise into access charges. We will also continue to work with our research support teams to ensure that opportunities for career progression for technicians are costed into research projects.**

**Point 14** – *“Employers of technical staff, funders and sector bodies (e.g. professional associations and learned societies) should ensure technical staff sit on appropriate institution- and sector level decision-making committees and boards to ensure these groups reflect the community they represent and to provide diversity of views and expertise.”* **Technical staff are well embedded within groups and committees across the institution. This includes CaDRe (Career Development of Researchers), ECR Group (Early Career Researchers), Lab Users Group, Sustainability and Environment, LGBTQ+ Network, AWERB (Animal Welfare Ethical Review Board), and the Biological Safety Committee. Technicians are also represented on PACE (Professional and Career Development Group) by Sarah Roberts acting as an Executive sponsor.**

**Point 15** – *“Government policymakers should ensure the inclusion of technical staff in consultations on sector-level policy, for example through invitations to roundtables and consultations.”* **We have addressed this at an institutional level by increasing the representation of technicians on committees throughout the school as outlined in point 14.**

**Point 16** – *“The TALENT Commission advises the creation of a new collaborative entity, provisionally to be called the UK Institute for Technical Skills & Strategy [working title] that builds on the multi-stakeholder approach of the Technician Commitment, to represent and provide a conduit to the technical community, advising government, sector initiatives, funding bodies and other organisations.”* **Opportunities provided by the ITSS, such as Knowledge Exchange Placements and Technical Leadership Programmes have been widely disseminated amongst technical staff at LSTM.**

6. Please provide a 36-month action plan; detailing plans to ensure your organisation continues to address the themes of the Technician Commitment and details of how impact will be evidenced and initiatives resourced. This may be detailed here or attached to this document as an appendix.

Our 36-month action plan is attached to this document as a separate submission document.

7. Please evidence how the ‘technician voice’ was present in the development and formation of the 36-month action plan.

The action plan was put together by LSTM’s Technical Committee, a voluntary committee consisting of only technicians. The committee engaged with the wider technical workforce to bring together ideas, before formalising these ideas into the action plan produced with help from senior staff particular those working in Learning & Development and Research Culture.

Therefore, though senior staff are aware of the action plan and have helped formalise it, it is predominantly a document produced by technicians to represent the 'technician voice'.

8. Please confirm that your Technician Commitment status and 3-year action plan is published on your organisation's website and provide the relevant URL here:

The updated action plan is available to view alongside our Technician Commitment status here:  
<https://www.lstmed.ac.uk/research/lstm-technician-commitment>.

Signed.....  ..... (Technician Commitment Nominated Institutional Lead)

Date: 26 July 2024

Signed  (Technician Commitment Signatory – Leader of Institution)

Date: 26 July 2024