

Queen's University Belfast Technician Commitment Action Plan

Queens University Belfast Technician Commitment ACTION PLAN (updated May 2019)						
VISIBILITY	Action	Comments	Progress & Next Steps	Responsibility	Start	End
Ensure that all technicians within the organisation are identifiable and that the contribution of technicians is visible within and beyond the institution	Identify numbers and locations of all technicians across the University	This has been challenging because there has been significant school and Faculty restructuring of the University in recent years. In addition, there are many staff who are not on obvious "technical" grades but nevertheless are performing technical roles. Likewise, in some schools and directorates we have technical staff who are performing essential administrative roles albeit on technical grades. In most cases, the basis for this change in role was a response to cover an essential activity with highly competent staff.	There has been an initial look at technician numbers, in particular looking at permanent and fixed term contracts. This was started in MHLs will be investigated by People & Culture at institutional level. It has been decided that at this time we will only include those staff members who are identified by the University as being in the Technician category and those with technical job titles	Technical Managers/People & Culture		May-19 Jul-19
	Fully engage with our technical staff in a more consistent manner	In MHLs an initial Technician Forum was held and then followed up with formation of a Technician Committee with representation of all technical grades and from all areas of the Faculty. This committee, chaired by the Dean of Innovation and Impact, meets monthly and deals primarily with the themes of the Technician Commitment.	The QUB Technician Commitment Steering Group has been formed and plans to meet regularly to discuss the issues brought by the technical community. The SG includes a PVC (UEB representative), Technical Lead, technicians, Senior Faculty academics, People & Culture, Unite representative. Review every 2 years and make changes if necessary. EPS, AHSS have also formed a technician committee similar to that in MHLs. Each committee has members across grades and areas and tries to address issues raised by technicians within each Faculty. Ideas and concerns will be fed up to the QUB Technician Commitment Steering Group by their nominated representative(s). Potential rotation of technical staff on committee, reviewed every 2 years. Formation of a University wide Technical managers forum, to discuss ways of becoming more involved in relevant strategic areas and activities.	QUBTCSG		Jan-19 May-19
	Inform technicians of the Technician Commitment values	MHLs held a Technician Event in June 2018, with 100 from 130 faculty technicians attending. Hosted by Professor Alan Sitt, Dean of Innovation and Impact, there were presentations given by Jane Banks (Science Council), Suhel Mah (HEATED), Mel Leitch (University of Newcastle) and John Paul Ashton (IST). The guest speakers provided information on the Technician Commitment, the support offered by different organisations and how this is moving forward in other institutions. EPS has held two more Technical Services staff events in September 2017 and March 2018, with approximately 70 staff at each event.	A University wide event was held on 9 January 2019, attended by the Vice Chancellor, technicians and invited guests. There were presentations from Prof Ian Greer (VC, QUB), Mark Price (PVCPEPS, Institutional Lead for the TC at QUB), Claire McAlinden (Director of Operations, EPS), Natalie Kennerley (NTDC), Mel Leitch (IST) & Karen Henderson (University of Reading). We plan to hold a follow up event June 2019 to update our technicians on progress and plans for the TC at Queen's. We hope to organise a Technician Showcase to publicise the work carried out by technicians across the University. If successful this could become an annual event.	QUBTCSG		Jun-19 Dec-19
	Review with new Vice Chancellor one year on from signature and plan a one year anniversary event.	A presentation to the VC and senior University Managers regarding progress in all areas.	To present September/Oct 2019	UEB Representative		Sep-18 Sep-19
	We will create a team involving staff from all three faculties to develop our Technician Commitment webpage to ensure that it publicises our commitment to technical services staff and that it is also an effective tool for the team and we will assign resources to support that team to develop it.	The website will raise visibility of technical staff, celebrate success and help staff to access useful resources will create online technical biographies or posters. For each technician advertising areas, skills, interests, location, publications, achievements, outreach activities, awards, etc	Initial target to get a Comms team in place. Volunteers from across all areas of the University.	QUBTCSG		19-May Jun-19
	We will support the establishment of a Technicians Network	We aim to share information and create a strong technician community across the University, including technicians in AHSS who have not been involved in the initiative to date. This will leverage opportunities for wider networking through the Technician Commitment and by supporting attendance at conferences and workshops and hosting events at QUB.	Networking event 6 June.	SG Technicians		Jun-19 Ongoing
RECOGNITION						
Support technicians to gain recognition through professional registration	Inform and encourage technical staff to achieve Professional Registration	MHLs has focused initial activity on Professional Registration and there are ongoing plans to promote these opportunities amongst our technical staff. Following on from strong representation from IST, in particular, we are planning to encourage as many staff as possible to consider registration to an appropriate professional body. MHLs will be providing incentives to help financially with this process (beyond the year subscription charges). There is also ongoing activity across the university (particularly with HR) to ensure that Professional Registration is recognised and valued.	An IST Professional Registration workshop was hosted by MHLs in September 2018 and invitations extended to technical staff from other areas of the University. This was attended by 38 technicians. Since the workshop there have been regular informal meetings of technicians supporting each other in order to achieve Prof Reg. We have 2 successful applicants, one at Chartered Scientist (CSci) and one at Registered Scientist (RSci). We plan to continue to encourage and support Professional Registration through Science Council, IST and other relevant Professional bodies, striving to achieve Employer Champion status. We will offer a second workshop for all QUB technicians. AFHEA professional recognition scheme within QUB has been offered to those technicians within MHLs who would like to become accredited by the Centre for Educational Development within QUB. This is a highly sought accreditation by many staff categories across all institutions and well worth achieving in recognition of all the teaching that technicians do and it is not specific to Grade. QUB will pay for initial registration fee.	MHLs Faculty Committee		Jan-18 Ongoing
	Raising the profile of technical staff within the organisation through their engagement with academic colleagues across the faculty and in our professional services directorates.	This has been successful in EPS with respect to engagement with Estates to improve buildings management processes. There has been recognition of technicians acting as Building Liaison Officers and increased collaboration with academic colleagues in the equipment planning process. We have also acknowledged technical services staff in our annual faculty staff recognition awards. Senior technical staff have been invited to sit on school/centre management boards and in some schools/centres technical staff of all grades are welcome to attend monthly school/centre board meetings. This is promoting inclusivity within all levels of staff.	Building on this success to actively encouraging the University to engage in and expand this to incorporate an inclusive system across all schools, faculties and directorate.	Heads of School/ School Management Boards		
	Affiliate Partner of the National Technician Development Centre, engaging with EPS	EPS will continue to engage with the National Technician Development Centre to avail of their expertise in workforce planning, technical career pathways and technician professional development	Information session held by NTDC for the QUBTCSG 18/04/2019 followed by EPS workshop. EPS are continuing to investigate toolkits provided by NTDC	Technical Managers Forum People & Culture		Sep-18 Ongoing
	We will use our network to benchmark against other organisations	We will strive to apply best practice and will develop our own framework for technical jobs within the University and a clear career development roadmap for our team, including supporting Professional Registration.	We continue to attend national technician networking events and conferences to adopt ideas and best practice across the Higher Education sector	QUBTCSG/ People and Culture		Jul-17 Ongoing
CAREER DEVELOPMENT						
Enable career progression opportunities for technicians through the provision of clear, documented career pathways	Our Faculties have already provided opportunities for interested technical staff to attend national conferences and workshops.	This has been an important development because attendees at these meetings have been exposed to good practice and successes across other institutions. Each Faculty has provided resource to ensure that interested and motivated technicians can attend these meetings.		QUBTCSG		Jun-17 ongoing
	QUB has re-signed to HEATED membership (MHLs signed 50 - 250 technicians)	We have welcomed Suhel Mah (HEATED Programme Manager) to QUB to provide advice and information on what his organisation can offer technical staff, especially relating to skills development and CPD.	Technical staff were invited to join the HEATED Scotland Regional meetings in Napier and Stirling Universities to discuss the progress of the Technician Commitment in different institutions. This provided a great opportunity to network with technicians from other universities and share ideas and best practice. We hope to offer to host a HEATED regional meeting in Jan/Feb 2020.			May-18 ongoing
	We will support technical staff to take advantage of internal training opportunities and will identify and deliver new training needs.	This will include a review of the potential for secondments, work shadowing, temporary promotions, mentoring and the mechanisms necessary to make these work effectively (including ensuring appropriate staffing levels to cover additional workload)	We hope to identify training needs and ensure we can deliver bespoke courses. Mentoring has now been made available in some areas of MHLs faculty and should soon become available in other faculties.	Learning & Development		Jun-19 ongoing
SUSTAINABILITY						
Ensure the future sustainability of technical skills across the organisation and that technical expertise is fully utilised	We will research different recruitment models such as apprenticeships, traineeships and secondments as mechanisms to ensure a strong pipeline of skilled technical services staff.	Widening participation Agenda Attract school leavers Implement a training programme for new technical staff	(MP to link up with FE and Industry sectors to create link for apprenticeships including funding.	People & Culture		May-19
	Succession Planning	To make Queens University an attractive and exciting place to work. Changing the way we advertise and the information contained in the advertisement is required to reflect the best assets we have at present. Current employment opportunities as a whole makes it harder to attract the best quality recruits. Our geographic location makes it doubly so and in order to change that we need radical thinking, investment and a desire to change.	EPS People and Culture staff were looking at new advertising profiles to include more than just the job and pay. Involvement of senior Technicians across the University in this process would bring together known problems from different areas which could help identify solutions.			
EVALUATING IMPACT						
Regularly assess the impact of actions taken in support of the commitment to ensure their effectiveness	Review of progress to be conducted and communicated to technical staff	Updates can be given at Technician networking events and/or published on webpage				
	We can monitor technician participation in events and record feedback	Feedback forms will be collated and recorded				
FURTHER STEPS (not currently included in action plan)						
RECOGNITION	Recognition of technical specialist roles within the career framework.	To endorse and expand the existing role templates to enable the formation of a clearly defined career pathway in a structure that represents the needs of our University.	Although this currently exists it is not widely recognised when discussing upgrading procedures at school level.			
CAREER DEVELOPMENT	Produce a career path framework that reflects the needs and aspirations of technicians whilst being mindful of limited technical resources.	The current tree like structure is suitable for larger numbers of technicians but it also includes stunted prospects compared to other groups of employees. A new structure is needed to show inclusion at higher levels of strategic planning and a reflection of specialist and flexible roles.	There has been some discussion around a 2 path structure rolled out in Reading University. Whilst some aspects, specialist roles identified and recognised, are welcome, there is further work to be done to make it fit our workforce.	People & Culture		