Evaluating Impact through Self-Assessment & Future Action Planning

Organisation: **University of Hertfordshire**
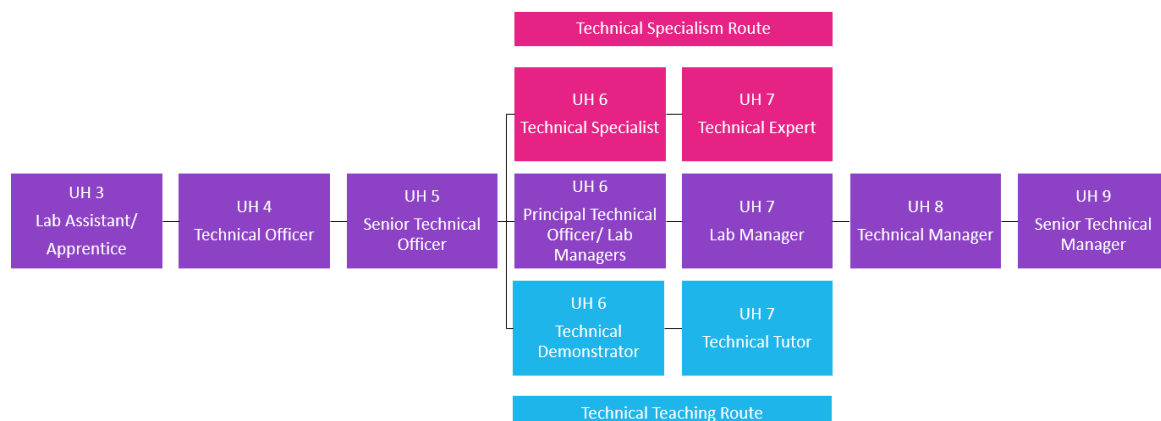
Name of Institutional Lead: **Professor Daniel McCluskey**

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> _Please provide an overview of technical staff structures in your organisation, along with details of any changes to these over the past 6 years in response to the Technician Commitment._

The University of Hertfordshire hosts approximately 300 technical staff across five Strategic Business Units as well as the Library and Computing Services teams. The technical staff structure has undergone great change since the commencement of the last action plan. Two distinct pathways have been introduced; the Technical Specialism pathway and the Technical Teaching pathway. These pathways run in conjunction to the traditional managerial paths that where once the only option for progression. We believe that this has had a positive impact on students, researchers, and the technicians alike. Our Technical Specialism pathway allows the more equipment-oriented technicians to further refine and grow their skillsets to better serve students and researchers through deep understanding of equipment and processes. Our technical teaching pathways allows for technical skills to be more easily transferred through our experienced technical staff to the students. The University of Hertfordshire has also allowed schools with large numbers of technical staff to be run by a Head of Department opposed to a Sr. Technical Managers, which meant creating a very senior technical post. This has ensured a guaranteed technical voice in all business planning for these schools and a greater championing of the technicians in those departments.

Technical Career Pathways: University of Hertfordshire

Technical Specialism Route

| UH 6 Technical Specialist | UH 7 Technical Expert |

| UH 3 Lab Assistant/ Apprentice | UH 4 Technical Officer | UH 5 Senior Technical Officer | UH 6 Principal Technical Officer/ Lab Managers | UH 7 Lab Manager | UH 8 Technical Manager | UH 9 Senior Technical Manager |

| UH 6 Technical Demonstrator | UH 7 Technical Tutor |

Technical Teaching Route

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?

The Technician Commitment (T.C.) reports to the Office of the Vice Chancellor through the Technician Commitment Champion. This is a member of Sr. Management of the University, normally a Dean of a School. The day to day running of T.C. initiatives is done by the T.C. Lead. This is a member of the technical staff of UH and is a rotating commitment. To assist the T.C. Lead, UH has a T.C. Steering Group. This Group is comprised of a diverse range of technical staff across the Institution at various levels. Membership to the T.C. Steering Group is opened each year at our annual Technician Commitment event, with the only requirement for entry being line managers approval. The group meets bi-monthly and decides on topics relevant to all UH technical staff and assists in planning events such as the T.C. annual Away Day and the Café Tech showcases.

The T.C. program has a dedicated budget which is derived from all the schools comprising UH, who employ technical staff. This budget is specifically dedicated to technical functions/showcases, conferences, and Skill Up! a technical staff training fund opened to all technical staff across UH. This funding is available for training courses and relevant conferences. Applications are reviewed and awarded by the funding board, consisting of members of the T.C. steering group.

Engagement with technical staff at UH through the Technician Commitment is far reaching. Our internal institutional engagement includes regular Café Tech events and an annual Technician Commitment Away Day for technical staff. The Café Tech events focus on a particular section of technical staff, who demonstrate what they do to other members of staff. It has proven to be very useful in identifying cross discipline skill sets as well as great internal networking. Our annual Technician Commitment Away Day is another chance for the technicians to gather together over a meal and hear about opportunities beneficial to them as well as wider happenings, previous speakers included Ian Hancox on an ITSS overview, Martin Dellar with information on the Papin Awards, and speakers discussing various professional registrations available to the various disciplines represented by our technicians.

Engagement in our wider community is similarly widespread. Technical staff often lead these activities. They include outreach programmes in our Astronomy domes where we engage school aged children's interests in Physics and Astronomy. This is held through the SEP Network program. The University of Hertfordshire works with the local council to provide a weeklong work experience to students in the local area. This program is most notable in the School of Physics, Engineering, and Computer Science but plans are being developed to roll this program out across other schools in the University. Donation of unused equipment has been a practice by the relevant schools at the University with donations going to local schools, colleges, Scouts programmes, and charity groups. The University participates in the Amgen Project. This is a project run by Herts Law School (Education). It is an international scheme where schools are provided with equipment and lesson plans to facilitate science education sessions in their classes. UH have a contract with the Centre for STEM Education and are one of 5 hubs (currently) who issue kits and provide support for the schools.

Please provide a 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.

Please See Appendix 1

Explanation for categories in red:

"Submit application for Employer Champion status following confirmation of 6 successful professional registrations with Science Council." – While some progress has been made in professional registration across the technical staff at UH, the oncoming Technical Commitment team took a broader approach and pushed for professional registration across the entirety of the technical teams. We had a guest speaker from the Science Council discuss the professional registration open to technical staff at our 2022 Technician Commitment away day. Unfortunately, this did not inspire many of the technical staff to seek registration.

"Meet the challenges of time constraints with development activities such as off the job training e.g. LinkedIn Learning" – After investigating, the T.C. team decided time constraints would best be dealt with at the local level. The team pushed for awareness of development opportunities, especially through the technical staff specific TEAMS page, but ultimately, we believed we would focus our attention on other actions.

"Identify means of delivering succession planning to support the future business needs of specialist roles within career pathways: map out how technical staff can move within the University both in other areas in technical roles and other job families" – The T.C. team put the majority of our resources into developing the new career pathways open to the technical staff. We mean to pursue this point in our next action plan.

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 TC group can evidence impact through the following examples:

Sustainability:

Introduction of the new career pathways for technical staff. This has been the focus of the Technician Commitment Champion, Lead, and steering group for the last three years. We were successfully able to introduce the Technical Specialism and Technical Teaching pathways available across all Schools of UH. The University had lost experienced technicians because there was no progression possibility, apart from the traditional managerial route. These pathways have allowed us to retain highly skilled and motivated members of the Teams which has had a very positive impact on staff and student experience alike. One of our first Technical Experts, Micheal Wilkins, stated: *"The Technical Expert role makes it possible for me to spend my time involved with research projects, student projects and apprentice training. Not being distracted by management tasks has allowed me to be involved in a greater number of diverse projects across the university. I find it can be challenging, but both incredibly interesting and satisfying."*

A Technical Tutor in the School of Creative Arts, Adrian Winward, writes:

"The new Technical Tutor role has allowed me to consolidate my previously separate technical and visiting lecturer contracts into a single job, simplifying what had previously been an awkward,

complex arrangement. With this new job title, it is clear to both students and staff exactly what my role at UH is. It gives me formal recognition of all the teaching work that I do. It has allowed me to increase my contact hours with the students. This position has also been great for encouraging cross-collaboration between courses and breaking down barriers, as well as letting students and staff see technicians in a different light. Overall, the new Technical Demonstrator and Tutor roles have been a hugely positive addition to the School of Creative Arts. They are a fantastic opportunity for all UH Technical staff."

Career Development:

The technical Skill Up! funding programme has been formalised and the budget expanded since the last submission. The Skill Up! Funding programme has a dedicated page on our UH Staff page as well as regular advertisements by our Marcomms team. This programme is available to all UH Technical staff upon an application submission demonstrating the criteria is meet, to include commitment to principles of the Technician Commitment. The programme is managed by a panel consisting of T.C. Commitment steering group members. This dedicated funding has allowed technical staff to participate in staff development opportunities that may not be available using School resources. Examples of training include use of an English Wheel for metal fabrication, advanced outdoor first aid courses, mask making techniques using latex, Health and Safety training to include both IOSH and NEBOSH courses, and Functional English and Maths skills providing technical staff with the opportunity of future career progression, which may not be possible otherwise. This funding has had an incredibly positive impact across the Institution and will be further implemented.

Visibility:

In conjunction with the Universities Marcomms team, great strides have been made in the area of visibility of technicians. Achievements and roles of the technical staff have been published both internally through school and University periodicals and newsletters, as well as externally through X and LinkedIn. A few examples can be found here:
https://x.com/UniofHerts/status/1728017937506726302

https://x.com/UniofHerts/status/1747922070988529993

https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7161617220912025600?updateEntityUrn=urn%3Ali%3Afs_feedUpdate%3A%28V2%2Curn%3Ali%3Aactivity%3A7161617220912025600%29

A dedicated award category for technical staff was created in the annual Vice Chancellor's Awards. This helped to differentiate between the contributions of the technical staff and the other professional staff at the University. Nominations for the awards are submitted by members of all teams across the University who observe and value the contributions made by the technical teams daily. Kate Yiannacou from the Marcomms team writes "We were pleased to introduce the category of Technical Staff Member of the Year to our annual staff recognition awards scheme, the Vice-Chancellor's Awards, in 2020. The award was created to recognise the invaluable role our technical staff play here at the University, supporting both students and staff."

Recognition:

Recognition of technical staff takes many forms at the University of Hertfordshire. Internally, the technical teams participate in the Café Tech events. The Café Tech events focus on a particular group of technical sections across the Schools of UH. The technicians have the opportunity to showcase the day-to-day operations, achievements they have made, as well as technical prowess in their field. Café Tech events have also been an incredible way to get technicians from the various schools to

interact. This has led to collaboration and assistance on technical matters. Externally, the technicians are encouraged by the T.C. Team to nominate technical staff for external awards. Aiden Bygrave (Principle Technical Officer in Geography) was shortlisted in the Contribution for Teaching category as a result. Professional registration opportunities are encouraged through our dedicated Teams page for technical staff. We have also included ensured that technicians are permitted into UH's Continuing Professional Academic Development Programme which has led to HEA fellowships.

Representation:

Whilst not formally a pillar of the Technician Commitment, the University of Hertfordshire believes in representation of technical staff. This is evidenced by technical staff involvement in the Staff Council, the People Committee, as well as a member of technical staff recently being nominated to the University Board of Governors, through an election process. Technical staff also have the ability to represent themselves on presentation panels for the hiring of senior members of staff. On the local level, involvement in the T.C. Steering group is open to all members of the technical teams with all position levels welcome.

As mentioned previously, the University has created technical Head of Department roles that put the postholders in all Senior Management meetings to represent technicians and their issues to inform decision making within the academic schools.

The University formed the People Committee which reports to the Vice Chancellors Executive and there are two technicians on this. Following a submission of a formal report the University has taken the following actions: made the Teachers' Pension Scheme available to Technical Tutors, arranged a technician only Q&A with the Vice Chancellor. It is also considering introducing menstrual leave for technicians whose roles are very physical.

The University formed a Staff Council and there is technical representative on that too. While it is early days for the Council, there is a seat at the table.

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

The University of Hertfordshire has enacted some recommendations and is currently implementing others from the Talent Commission Report.

Visibility, outreach, and public engagement for technical staff can be demonstrated through our many events showcasing technical skills. The most recent example was the Festival of Ideas held in May of 2024 which hosted technical staff displays in the area of engineering and Computer science. The School of Life and Medical Sciences, Pharmaceutical Chemistry department have been involved in visits by local schools to our campus to discuss instrumentation. Technical staff have also visited local schools. The University has an apprenticeship program which currently hosts technical apprenticeships in multiple Schools. Provision is given to technical staff for development opportunities such as technical training and professional registration. This is currently ten days. The entirety of the recruitment process for hiring of technicians is managed by the technical staff in all schools across the University. The technical staff draft the job descriptions, short list, and hire new members to the technical teams. Technical staff are also welcome to sit on presentation panels for the selection of some academic as well as senior management positions within the schools. The

University is proud of its Founding Signatory status and will continue to engage with its initiatives. This includes engagement with the ITSS. The T.C. Lead, Alex Kingstrom was afforded the opportunity to hold a discussion on the newly implemented career progression pathways by the University, through the ITSS. This highlighted how UH solved a problem facing the whole of UK HE institutes.

We have made a good start on the recommendations of the TALENT commission report, but we are looking to further implementation with our 2024-2027 Action Plan. In the next three years we would like to enable opportunities for technical staff to be considered as co-investigators, co-supervisors, for grants or projects. We will investigate the appointment of an institutional strategic lead to pursue the Technician Commitment agenda and enact recommendations of the TALENT Report. We will further ensure technical staff engage with professional development opportunities where available, including both pre-existing and new opportunities for training, mentoring, professional registration, or presenting at conferences and events.

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). Please evidence how the 'technician voice' was present in the development and formation of the 36-month action plan.

See Appendix B

The initiatives will be resourced through the dedicated Technician Commitment budget granted to the T.C. Champion on an Annual basis. Where this budget is insufficient, technical staff will petition the relevant schools or the Office of the Vice Chancellor for funding consideration.

The 36-month action plan was a collaboration with many inputs. Actions included ideas from the TALENT Commission report recommendations, ideas gained from other university initiatives through conference attendance, as well as an open call for recommendation to all technical staff at UH. The potential actions were collated by the T.C. Lead and decided upon by the Technical Steering group, with representation of all levels of technical staff.

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:

https://www.herts.ac.uk/staff/technical-staff

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

Date: 8th July 2024

Signed………………………………………..(Technician Commitment Signatory – Leader of Institution)

Date: 11th July 2024

Appendix 1:

2021-2023 Institution Action Plan

	Work substantially completed / ongoing priority		Work initiated but not completed		Work yet to be started

Ongoing Actions	Action Focus in Year		
	2021	**2022**	**2023**
• Drive progress in our Technical Commitment through executive sponsorship and governance.	☑	☑	☑
• Refresh our Self-Assessment and monitor our Action Plan for completion through dedicated resources.	☑	☑	☑
• Establish an process for collating and publishing nationally recognised development opportunities.	☑		
• Ensure good practice is shared widely to promote the contributions of technical staff to the University, the wider community, teaching, enterprise and research.	☑	☑	☑
• Monitor and track actions to recognise achievement and maintain progress.	☑	☑	☑
Staff Well-being			
• Ensure equality gaps, health and wellbeing objectives are prioritised.	☑	☑	
• Recognise the significant 'essential worker' contribution made by technical staff in supporting the UH community during the Covid-19 pandemic.	☑		
• Promote a healthy lifestyle in collaboration with Hertfordshire Sports Village / Active Staff and local wellbeing plans.	☑	☑	
• Record working arrangements giving consideration to supporting staff to work flexibly.	☑		
Visibility			
• Ensure technical staff are included in local and institution-wide planning at operational and business level.	☑		
• Create a dedicated technical staff communication channel.	☑		
• Record all UH employed technical staff, and provide links to teaching, learning and research development activities.	☑		
• Continue to hold internal showcases, events and conferences for technical staff.	☑	☑	☑
• Continue to recognise the contribution of technical staff through University communications.	☑	☑	☑
Recognition			
• Be proactive in seeking external recognition for technical staff through awards and publications.		☑	☑
• Define and implement a process for the ongoing promotion of professional registrations by linking to CPD allocations.		☑	☑
• Showcase the role and contribution of technical staff in Teaching and Learning.	☑		

• Further develop the hybrid role of technician / tutor / lecturer for implementation within career pathways.	☑	☑	☑
• Submit application for Employer Champion status following confirmation of 6 successful professional registrations with Science Council.		☑	
• Continue to ensure technical staff are eligible for recognition within the VC Awards scheme.	☑	☑	☑
Career Development			
• Develop a career development framework for technical staff.	☑	☑	
• Develop a set of job families, alongside a clear career pathway model, for technical staff at the University.		☑	☑
• Promote informal and formal development opportunities for technical staff (success criteria - apprenticeships; mentoring, coaching and shadowing etc.)		☑	☑
• Maintain and evolve membership of relevant organisations that champion and promote technical staff expertise and contributions within HE.		☑	
• Review the technical development SkillUp! programme	☑		
Sustainability			
• Meet the challenges of time constraints with development activities such as off the job training e.g. LinkedIn Learning	☑	☑	☑
• Identify means of delivering succession planning to support the future business needs of specialist roles within career pathways: map out how technical staff can move within the University both in other areas in technical roles and other job families		☑	☑
• Develop strategy for staff retention within specialist areas, as well as develop a talent pipeline from apprenticeship level upward.		☑	☑

UK INSTITUTE FOR
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University of
Hertfordshire UH

Technician Commitment

Technician Commitment

Appendix B: 2024-2027 Institution Action Plan

	Action Focus in Year		
	2024	**2025**	**2026**
Ongoing:			
• Support the development and implementation of a new, simple, and fit-for purpose classification for technical roles in higher education, research, and innovation at all levels, such as by creating a new job family specifically for technical roles, separate from academic, administrative, or any other job family.		X	X
• Work with the new ITSS (Institute for Technical Skills and Strategy) to promote external training opportunities and collaborations.	X	X	X
• Increase membership and participation of technical staff in decision-making committees and groups, to widen representation.	X	X	X
Visibility			
• Encourage appropriate inclusion of technical staff as authors, co-authors, or contributors on published papers and presentations, including providing clear guidance for appropriate inclusion at relevant stages, and sharing examples of inclusion within newsletters or other media.	X	X	X
• Ensure technical staff are included in local and institution-wide planning at operational and business level across all sections to include LCS.	X	X	x
• Continue to recognise the contribution of technical staff through University communications.	X	X	X
• Participate in and engage with visibility events and local outreach activities where available, including internal department and institution showcase events, conferences, public engagement, open days, and visits to local schools and colleges. – TALENT Tech Responsibility.	X	X	X
• Introduce Technical Champions from other areas e.g. Academic or wider Professional Services.			X
Recognition			
• Be proactive in seeking external recognition for technical staff through awards and publications. Continue to highlight opportunities for recognition to all line managers within the technical teams.	X	X	X
• Define and implement a process for the ongoing promotion of professional registrations.		X	X
• Showcase the role and contribution of technical staff in Teaching and Learning.	X	X	X

Career Development			
• Ensure technical staff engage with professional development opportunities where available, including both pre-existing and new opportunities for training, mentoring, professional registration, or presenting at conferences and events.	X	X	X
• Develop a set of job families, alongside a clear career pathway model, for technical staff at the University.	X	X	
• Promote informal and formal development opportunities for technical staff (success criteria - apprenticeships; mentoring, coaching, and shadowing etc.)	X	X	X
• Maintain and evolve membership of relevant organisations that champion and promote technical staff expertise and contributions within HE.	X	X	X
• Review the technical development SkillUp! Programme.			X
• Encourage engagement with knowledge exchange programmes.		X	X
• Develop training and guidance on how technical staff can turn the things they've done into unique selling points and examples in applications and at interviews.	X		
Sustainability			
• Investigate the appoint an institutional strategic lead to pursue the Technician Commitment agenda and enact recommendations of the TALENT Report.	X		
• Develop strategy for staff retention within specialist areas, as well as develop a talent pipeline from apprenticeship level upward. Explore section-based T-levels in different sections across.	X	X	
• Formalise a plan to employ staff with a UH degree to promote home grown techs.		X	
• Guidance on the fundamentals of implementation of the new career pathways are achieved.		X	
• Provide transparent guidelines for how technical staff can be costed on to grants, sharing examples of best practice.	X	X	
• Enable opportunities for technical staff to be considered as co-investigators, co-supervisors, for grants or projects.	X	X	
• Take a strategic approach to the sustainability of technical skills and careers, and appropriate succession planning through horizon scanning and identifying current and potential future skills gaps.		X	X
• Expand entry routes to technical roles and careers by encouraging applicants from both vocational pathways and academic pathways.	X	X	
• Undertake an exercise to identify specialist skills across each service and develop roadmaps to enable successful succession planning and skill sharing.		X	X