

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.

Once your form has been submitted to the above email address, you will receive a confirmation email from the Technician Commitment team.

Technician Commitment Renewal Self-Assessment & Action Plan

Evaluating Impact through Self-Assessment & Future Action Planning

Organisation: Northumbria University

Name of Institutional Lead: Professor Louise Bracken (Pro-Vice Chancellor Research and Knowledge Exchange) and Dr Lizzy James (Director of Faculty Operations)

E-mail: louise.bracken@northumbria.ac.uk lizzy.james@northumbria.ac.uk

Date joined: Joined as signatories October 2021. Stage One Action Plan approved by University Executive October 2022.

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

Northumbria University's technical staff community has remained broadly stable in size since becoming a Technician Commitment signatory in October 2021, with 124.4 FTE technical staff currently employed. Technical staff are organised within Faculty Operations, a centralised structure providing support across three faculty-aligned sub-teams: Science and Environment (71.4), Society and Culture (42.3 FTE), and Health and Wellbeing (10.9 FTE). Each sub-team is led by the Director of Faculty Operations (DFO) for that Faculty, with the DFO Society and Culture as institutional theme lead for technical staff as a whole.

The technical career pathway runs from Apprentice Technician through Grade 3 Faculty Technician, Grade 5 Senior Faculty Technician to Grade 7 Technical Manager, with a G6 Senior Technical Specialist (Scientific Officer) role which accommodating our Research Technical Professional (RTP) staff. This pathway is communicated to all staff and underpins development conversations and CPD planning.

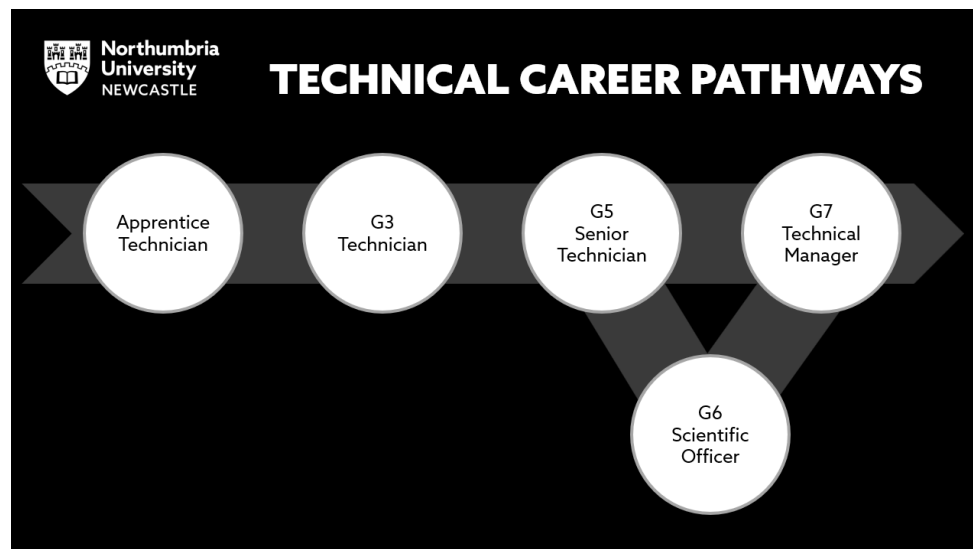


Figure 1: Northumbria University Technical Staff career pathway

The workforce is broadly young and stable: 44% of staff are under 35, 93% hold permanent contracts, and 86.5% work full time. Women now make up 44% of the workforce (59 of 133), though gender imbalance persists in senior and management roles, an area addressed in the 2026–2029 action plan. With 11% of staff aged 55 or over carrying deep institutional knowledge, succession planning is a clear

priority. The University underwent an academic restructure in 2025 moving from four faculties to three; this had minimal impact on the technical community at the time.

A full workforce analysis is provided in Appendix One.

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?

The Technician Commitment at Northumbria is led jointly by Professor Louise Bracken (PVC, Research and Knowledge Exchange) and Dr Lizzy James (Director of Faculty Operations, Society and Culture). Our Technician Commitment Working Group brings together Technical Managers from all three faculty areas, technical staff representatives, and colleagues from HR and OD.

Our governance approach has matured considerably during the first plan period. Rather than operating through a standalone steering group, the Working Group now feeds directly into the Research Culture Committee and subsequently the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee, embedding the TC agenda within mainstream research governance and ensuring senior oversight at PVC level. Technical staff representation has been extended to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee, Faculty Education Committees, and School Management Groups.

The Technician Commitment is supported by a dedicated annual fund of £20,000, resourced through the university's research culture investment. Open to all technical staff across all three faculty areas, the Technician Collaboration and Development Fund has supported over 25 projects spanning international knowledge exchange visits, specialist skills training, conference attendance, leadership programmes, and collaborative development activities.

Externally, Northumbria is represented on the UK ITSS (Institute for Technical Skills and Strategy) Advisory Board and Technician Council, holds membership of HEaTED for access to specialist training for technical staff, and is an affiliate partner of the National Technician Development Centre (NTDC). Our technical teams have helped form a regional collaboration network under UNEE (Universities of the North East England), and we have collaborated with Newcastle University on joint showcase events, Special Interest Groups, and joint apprenticeship networking. We regularly attend and present at the Technician Commitment signatory events and NTDC partner events, sharing our best practice with others in the sector. We are also linked into the T Level national network through our technical staff who are T Level ambassadors and have worked with The Literacy Trust (Dream Big Initiative) to go into schools and colleges to promote technical careers at universities. We are now sharing our equipment and facilities on the ITSS Capabilities Showcase with plans to further engage in this area.

We are project lead for the Career Pathways Action Group (CPAG), a sector-wide group coordinated through ITSS, developing a toolkit for career and promotional pathways in collaboration with Liverpool, Manchester Met and Leeds universities. Internally, we work closely with OD, Finance, and Research & Innovation Service (RIS) to drive improvements in workforce understanding, cost recovery visibility, and funding application practice, including completing a TRAC technician survey and improving TRAC space utilisation data.

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.

Please see Appendix Two

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).

Our technical staff are a huge asset to Northumbria University, and the impact of their work continues to impress us. We are proud of the progress we have made so far with our first action plan, both with the willingness the university has for supporting technical staff with opportunities, but also the willingness our technical staff have shown in taking the opportunities available to them. While our self-assessment captures broader progress against the action plan, we want to highlight a few specific areas of note:

Technicians being developed as researchers

A really compelling demonstration of what becomes possible when an institution genuinely invests in its technical staff is the story of Dr Liam Pearson-Noseworthy. A Senior Technician in the School of Sport and Exercise Science, Liam graduated with a PhD in May 2025 while working full-time, having started his career as a gym instructor with five GCSEs, then worked his way through access education, an undergraduate degree, a Master's, and a fully funded doctoral research project. His research on minimal-dose resistance training for older adults has produced nine peer-reviewed papers and has the potential to influence NHS exercise guidelines. His story illustrates precisely what the Technician Commitment is designed to enable, and was featured on the university's news platform:

<https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/about-us/news-events/news/from-gym-instructor-to-phd-graduate-northumbria-technicians-remarkable-journey-defies-the-odds/>

We are proud to support technical staff across our Faculties to complete a range of professional development opportunities, up to and including doctoral level research degrees.

Technical staff as research leaders

Dr Cecil Cherian Lukose (Scientific Officer, Science and Environment) was supported as Co-Investigator on an EPSRC core equipment grant (~£500K), a concrete example of a technical professional recognised and operating as a research leader. Supported by the Technician Collaboration Fund, Cecil has presented at major international conferences with peer-reviewed publications, achieved Chartered Engineer status, and has been selected for the Royal Society Pairing Scheme 2026, paired with Dame Chi Onwurah MP (Chair of the Science, Innovation and Technology Committee).

National award recognition

Linda Lightley (Scientific Officer, School of Design, Arts and Creative Industries) was shortlisted in April 2025 for the Papin Prize for Excellence in Sustainability, one of 68 technicians shortlisted nationally from 328 nominations, for her work developing Northumbria's bio-design facility and leading an Impact Innovation funded project on bio-based materials in sustainable fashion. She was also shortlisted for the THE Outstanding Technician of the Year 2025 for this work. Karen Haggerty (Senior Technician, School of Geography and Natural Sciences) won the Papin Prize for contribution to teaching in 2023 and has since been asked to share her work at national technician events. Technical staff are also regularly recognised through our internal SHINE Awards and Student-Led Teaching Awards.

<https://www.techniciancommitment.org.uk/meet-the-the-outstanding-technician-of-the-year-award-nominees-linda-lightley>

[Northumbria technician wins acclaimed Papin Prize | Northumbria University, Newcastle](#)

Development fund impact

The Technician Collaboration and Development Fund has supported over 25 staff-led projects since its establishment, spanning all three faculty areas and a genuinely diverse range of disciplines, from specialist ceramics training, fine art conservation skills, specialist fashion techniques, trips to specialist HF laboratories to learn best practice, isotope workshops, specialist training for the technical management of performance spaces, plus attendance and participation at a number of academic conferences where our technical staff have presented data and posters. Staff consistently bring new knowledge and techniques back into their teams, enhancing both teaching and research delivery, and the fund has become a powerful lever for staff ownership of their own specialist professional development.

Pipeline and community

T Level placements have been successfully hosted for Science students from Newcastle College, with Engineering T Level placements currently being completed for students from Northumberland College, contributing to Northumbria's role in building the next generation of regional technical talent. This is an area we want to continue to grow. Student interns have been embedded in technical workspaces through the university's internal scheme, several of whom subsequently applied for technical roles. Our social media presence and news stories promote the work and achievements of our technical community to a wider audience, and we hope to achieve more as we move LinkedIn during 2026. ITSS funding of £20,000 was secured for a Physics apprentice post. An ITSS TSN-funded undergraduate summer internship on the BioFIT project was completed in 2025 to promote RTP careers to the next generation. Our technical staff regularly engage in outreach work across the region including as part of national initiatives and NUSTEM, promoting both technical careers and the University as a whole. The annual Technician Conference and Technician Development Week are now well-established fixtures. Finally our technical staff in the School of Design, Arts and Creative Industries now have an exhibition each year, open to staff and students and our wider community, that showcases their technical skills.

<https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/about-us/news-events/news/poison-project-wins-award/>

[Open exhibition showcases variety of technical support skills](#)

Working to provide inclusive specialist spaces

Alex Coates (Technician, Science and Environment) was awarded funding from the VC Diversity and Inclusion Fund for the Make Space project, a relaxed, inclusive workshop series open to all university students and staff regardless of prior experience, building confidence in technical environments. The project received excellent feedback and is being developed further, with the aim of rolling learning across our specialist spaces so everyone feels welcome in them.

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

Northumbria's work actively addresses the TALENT Commission's key recommendations, though we recognise this remains an evolving area of focus as we move into our second action plan period. Our first action plan mapped against the 16 recommendations and progress can be seen in Appendix Two, some key points are discussed below:

THEME	HOW NORTHUMBRIA HAS ADDRESSED IT TO DATE
Visibility and recognition as researchers and educators	Technical staff embedded across key institutional committees including the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee, Research Culture Committee, Faculty Education Committees and School Management Groups. Pure profiles open to all eligible technical staff. Cecil Cherian Lukose's EPSRC Co-Investigator role (~£500K) is a concrete example of a technical professional operating as a research leader.
Career pathways and professional development	A clear four-grade Technical Career Pathway is established. Northumbria is lead institution on the ITSS Career Pathways Lab developing a sector-wide toolkit. The £20,000 annual development fund has supported ~12 staff through leadership programmes and ~15 staff to attend specialist events and training. Financial support for professional registration is in place across all faculty areas.
Pipeline of technical talent	Five ITSS Knowledge Exchange Scheme placements supported. ITSS funding of £20,000 secured for a Physics apprentice. T Level placements hosted from Newcastle College and Northumberland College. Student interns embedded in technical spaces. ITSS TSN-funded undergraduate summer internship completed in 2025.
National and regional engagement	Represented on the ITSS Advisory Board and Technician Council; member of HEaTED; affiliate partner of NTDC. Project lead for the ITSS Career Pathways Action Group. UNEE regional collaboration network established, coordinating skills, equipment and facilities strategically across north east universities.
Institutional leadership and sustainability	TC led at PVC level and embedded in mainstream research governance. Director of Faculty Operations (Society and Culture) serves as strategic lead for technical staff. The £20,000 annual fund is sustained through the university's research culture investment. The annual Technician Conference and Development Week provide a consistent platform for celebration and development.

- 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 2026–2029 action plan is attached as Appendix Three to this document. It builds on the foundations of the first plan period, carries forward the ambitious actions that were not commenced or completed but we want to continue, and introduces new priorities identified through consultation with technical staff during the 2025 Technician Development Week. It is structured around the four Technician Commitment pillars and aligned with the MI TALENT Commission's 16 recommendations. We feel we are building from a position of strength and now want to focus on delivering change through policy and strategy work.

Pillar 1: Visibility, Leadership and Sector Presence

This workstream addresses the need to more systematically capture, communicate and celebrate technical contributions both internally and externally. Key Year 1 actions include publishing external-facing technical staff profiles by launching our dedicated Technical Excellence web pages for 100+ staff, and establishing a LinkedIn presence with a minimum of 24 posts per year. Year 2 will introduce

a Communication Strategy, quarterly community forums, and establishing our contributions database tracking publications, research, education and outreach activity beyond what we capture in Pure. Year 3 targets a regional Technical Excellence Showcase, a Technical Impact Report, and for us to reach 25 instances of technical staff named as research co-authors.

Pillar 2: Recognition

Three workstreams address professional registration, research leadership, and institutional awards. On professional registration, the plan targets a 40% registration rate by July 2029, supported by partnerships with three professional bodies, information sessions for all staff, and support for fees and mentoring in Year 1. On research leadership, UKRI-aligned guidelines for costing technical staff on proposals will be shared, and a Technical Co-Supervisor scheme established by September 2027, targeting three technical staff registered as PhD co-supervisors by Year 3. A refreshed Northumbria Technical Excellence Awards scheme will launch in Year 1 across six categories, targeting 50 cumulative nominations across the plan period.

Pillar 3: Career Development

A Technical Career Pathways Framework will be co-created with our staff, piloted within one faculty, and rolled out university-wide by July 2027. The plan expands entry routes through T Level placement partnerships with three local colleges (target: 10 placements/year) and three new apprenticeship pathways at Level 3, scaling to Level 4–5 and targeting 10 apprentices in total by Year 3. A training needs analysis will be completed for all staff in Year 1, CPD recording established within the HR portal, with the Technician Commitment Fund fully deployed to support CPD, targeting 85% of staff completing 35+ hours of CPD and 10 HEA Associate/Fellowships by Year 3.

Pillar 4: Sustainability

A skills audit (proposed to be delivered through the NTDC Technician Survey) will be completed in Year 1, underpinning a Technical Skills Futures Strategy aligned to the university's 2030 Strategy and the future size and shape of our academic Schools. Succession plans including knowledge transfer, job shadowing, and recruitment pipelines will be in place by Year 2, targeting zero critical capability loss by Year 3. An EDI workstream will establish baseline metrics, deliver targeted outreach reaching 200 students, and launch a Women in Technical Leadership local initiative aligned with the ITSS Herschel Programme, targeting >30%+ women in technical leadership (G7+) by Year 3. A wellbeing workstream will deliver a baseline staff survey, consider how to implement workload planning to address single points of failure, and target 70% staff engagement and staff feeling valued with a strong sense of belonging by Year 3.

Resources and governance

The plan is supported by the existing £20,000 annual Technician Commitment Fund, a one-off £10,000 Technical Skills Survey in Year 1, and continuation of entry-level positions within the existing staffing envelope. Progress will be reviewed quarterly against SMART targets, reported to University Executive, and independently reviewed in Year 3.

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

The technician voice was central to the development of the 2026–2029 action plan at every stage. During the 2025 Technician Development Week, a dedicated session was held to review progress against the initial plan. A summary document was shared with all staff in advance so they could engage

meaningfully with the detail, and staff were invited to reflect openly on whether the university was accurately capturing its progress, including areas where more or less had been done. This directly informed the tone and content of the RAG analysis.

The second part of the session focused on the future. Staff shared the areas and priorities they would most like the next action plan to address. This conversation directly shaped the themes and workstreams of the 2026–2029 plan. Additional feedback was captured through technical staff drop-in sessions and by email.

Following those conversations, a draft plan was developed and shared with Technical Managers and the Technician Commitment Working Group for further structured feedback before finalisation.

The plan will be formally endorsed by the Research Culture Committee, the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee, and University Executive prior to submission.

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:

Signed 

Professor Louise Bracken, Pro Vice Chancellor for Research and Knowledge Exchange
(Technician Commitment Nominated Institutional Lead)

Date: 27th May 2026



Professor Andy Long, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive

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

Date: 27 May 2026