

Technician Commitment

Evaluating Impact through Self-Assessment & Future Action Planning

Organisation: University College London

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To provide some context, please provide a brief profile of your organisation (up to 250 words):

UCL is London's leading multidisciplinary university, with more than 12,500 staff and 39,000 students from 150 different countries. Founded in 1826 in the heart of London, UCL was the first university in England to welcome students of any religion and the first to welcome women on equal terms with men. Our annual income is more than £1 billion.

UCL's founders wanted to do things differently. Inspired by the ideas of philosopher Jeremy Bentham, they decided that education should be available to all who could benefit from it – and UCL was created. Today we stay true to our radical heritage, pioneering new approaches to teaching and learning and leading the world with our ground-breaking research across a huge range of disciplines.

UCL's main campus is in the Bloomsbury area of central London, with a number of institutes and teaching hospitals elsewhere in central London. In the most recent Research Excellence Framework rankings for research power, UCL was the top-rated university in the UK as calculated by Times Higher Education, and second as calculated by The Guardian/Research Fortnight.

Globally, UCL is ranked from seventh to twenty-sixth in the four major international rankings, and from seventh to tenth in the national league tables. UCL is a member of numerous academic organisations, including the Russell Group, and is part of UCL Partners, the world's largest academic health science centre, and the "golden triangle" of research-intensive English universities.

Please tell us how your organisation defines its technicians:

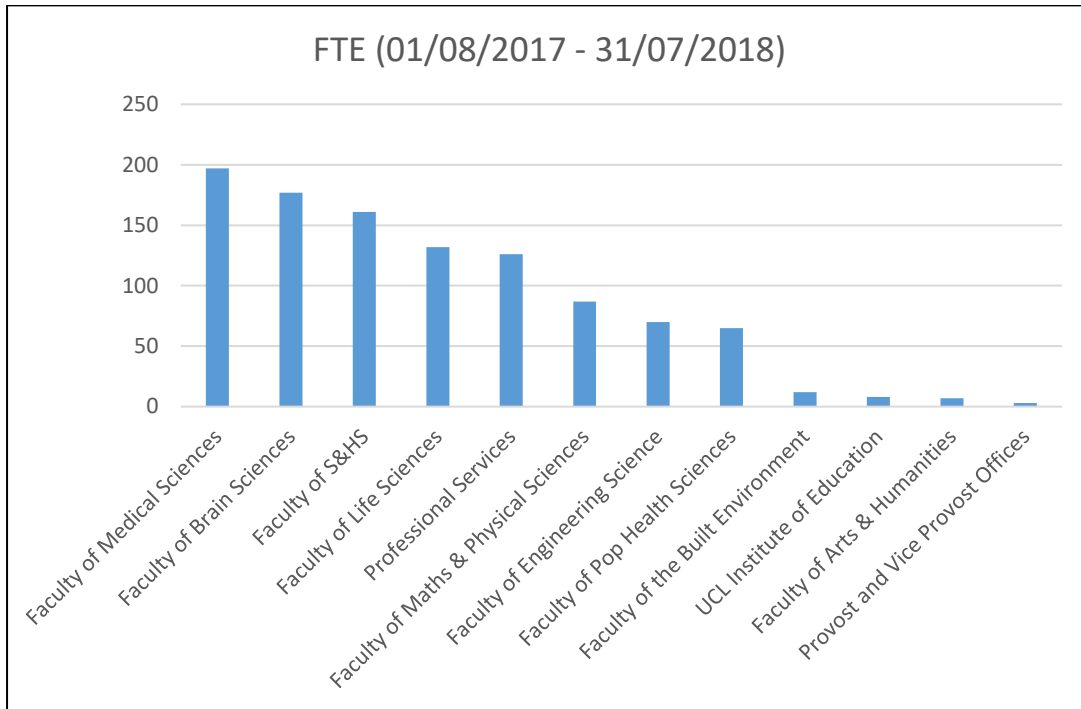
Technicians are part of Professional Services at UCL and are identifiable on the UCL HR system under a category called 'Technical Staff'. This categorisation however is not sufficient to allow us to understand the different professional identities of this group and therefore we need at a macro level to have a clear picture of the types of functions and capabilities of technicians at UCL.

As outlined in our action plan UCL will undertake a mapping exercise which will determine the most helpful of groupings which will be relevant for knowledge sharing, process improvement and career development.

How many technicians are there in your organisation? Please provide some information on where they are based and/or how they are structured (in terms of subject/discipline/department):

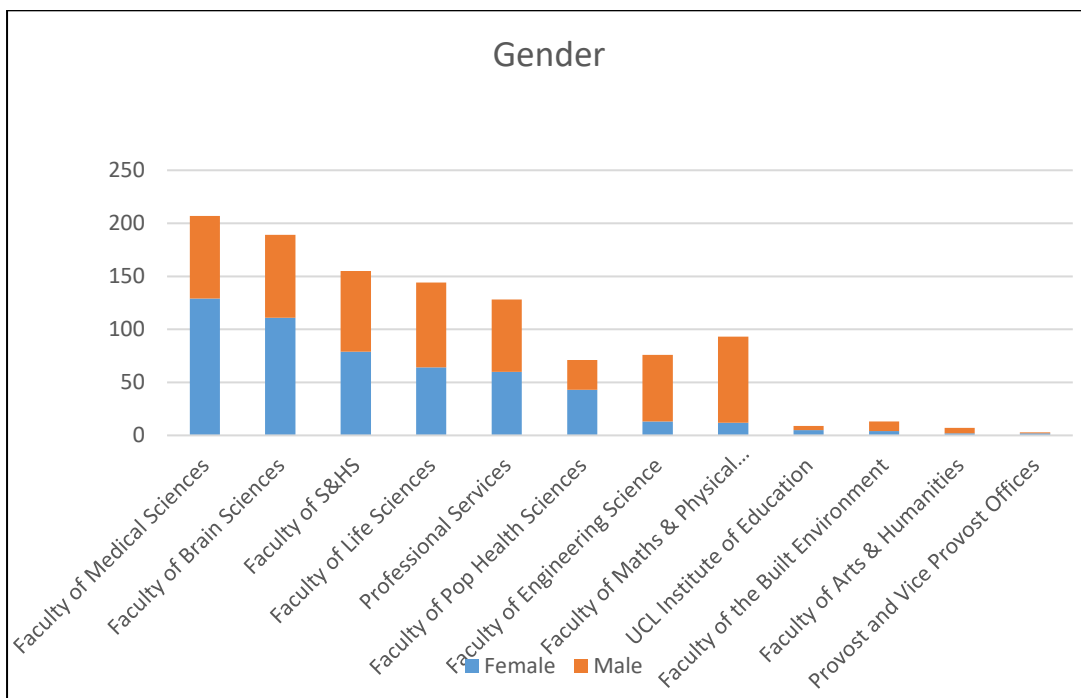
Technicians are employed in UCL's 11 faculties and are categorised as using the HESA Occupational Coding for Higher Education Staff (Laboratory, engineering, building, IT and medical technicians)

Table 1 – Technical staff FTE UCL total 1045



Technical staff in Professional Services include technicians employed in Estates and Information Services

Table 2 – Gender



In addition whilst there appears to be a good gender balance overall, there are significant imbalances in traditional STEM areas. The Technician Commitment Working Group will also work through UCL's Athena Swan Self-Assessment Teams to ensure that there is an explicit consideration of gender balance and career development of technicians in local action plans.

Please provide details of initiatives/programmes/activities that were already in place for the technical community within your organisation prior to becoming a signatory of the Technician Commitment:

Recruitment, retention and sustaining the technician skill base are vital to UCL's research and education mission and is why greater effort is being made to enhance the profile, career development and opportunities for the technician community.

Work started in 2016 to create *Communities of Practice* as a major component of the HR strategy to help improve staff engagement and have fulfilling careers at UCL.

There are three defining characteristics of a Community of Practice:

- Professional identity: staff share a commitment to the practice area and therefore a shared competence that distinguishes them.
- Learning and development: In pursuing their interest in their practice area, staff engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information. They build relationships that enable them to learn from each other.
- Shared resources: staff develop a shared repertoire of resources: (experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems) - a shared practice. Importantly, many members contribute to this, the expertise is not only concentrated in one part of the university.

In 2017 exploratory discussions with technicians confirmed an interest in forming Communities of Practice. Work also began at UCL to establish a methodology for determining career pathways and contact was made with the National Technician Development Centre to ensure that their approach could be successfully integrated into UCL's framework.

The Technician Commitment aims to ensure visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability for technical staff across higher education and research. Please tell us of any initiatives your organisation has put in place to address these themes since becoming a signatory of the Technician Commitment:

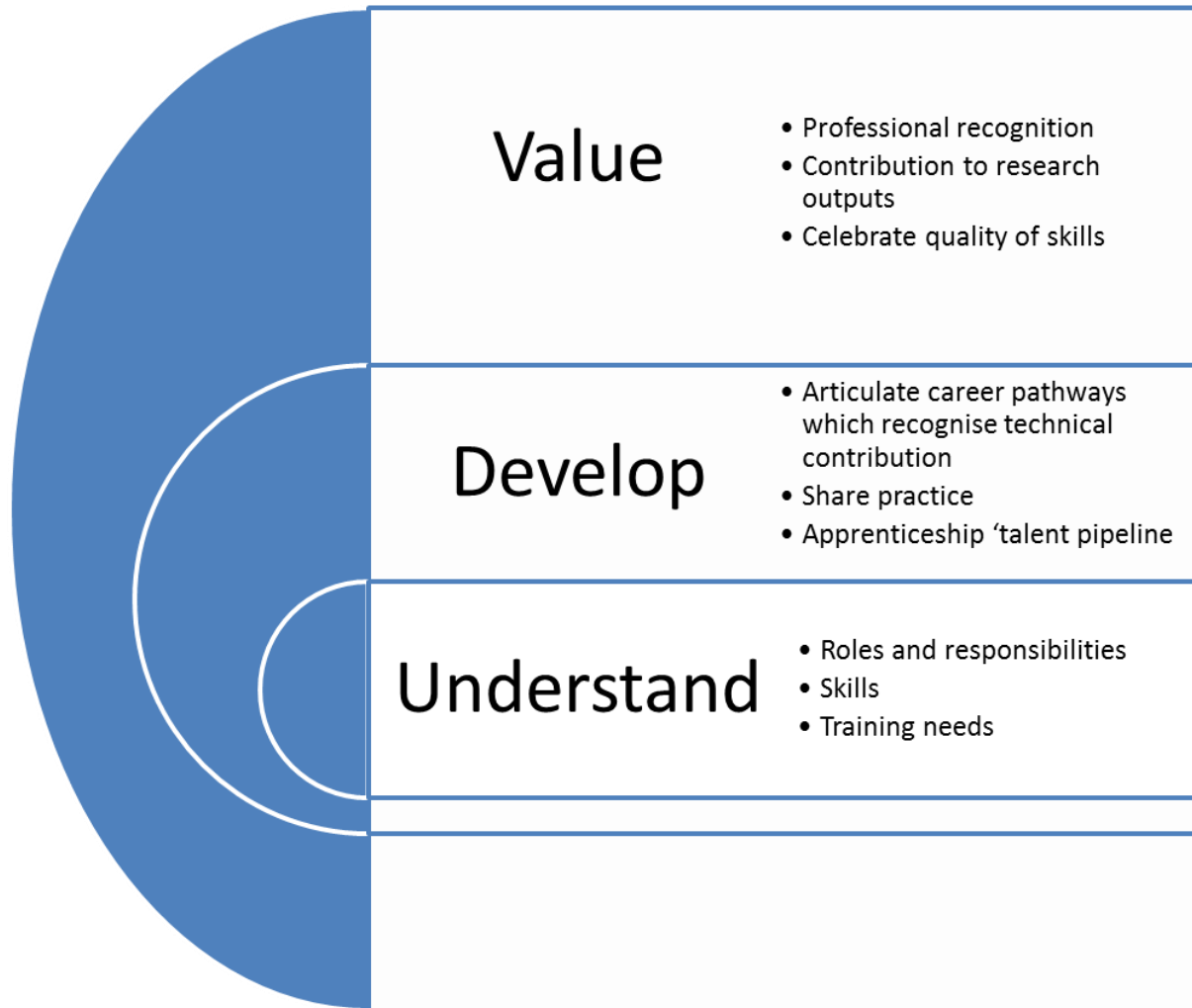
Since becoming a signatory of the Technician Commitment UCL has:

1. Gained the support of the Vice Provost Research to have the Technician Commitment included in the revised UCL Research Strategy.
2. Established a Technician Commitment Working Group consisting of Technical Managers representing a wide range of technical disciplines to:
 - Undertake a mapping exercise of technical roles at UCL
 - Recommend groupings for UCL Technical Communities of Practice
 - Contribute to UCL's first Technician Commitment self-assessment and 24-month action plan
3. Hosted a HEaTED London and South East network event, with over 75 UCL Technical Managers attending to learn more about the Technician Commitment and learn about UCL's plans to establish technical communities of practice as a way to work on the four areas of the Technician

Commitment. In addition there were presentations from HEIs involved in running Apprenticeship programmes and from the Centre Manager of the new National Technician Development Centre.

4. Introduced three new Technician Apprenticeship Programmes: In recognition of the need to develop new capabilities as well as retain existing technical skills, UCL has in put in place 'call-of-contracts' for a number of Apprenticeship Training Providers, including providers for Engineering, Laboratory and Animal technicians. Seven apprentice technicians have started in September 2018.
5. Created a web presence for the technical community to promote developmental opportunities including:
 - Higher Education Technical Education and Development (HEaTED) CPD events
 - UCL [HEA recognition scheme](#)

Please provide a 24-month action plan, detailing future plans to ensure your organisations addresses the themes of the Technician Commitment and details of how impact will be evidenced:



Proposed actions

- ❖ Improve Attraction to UCL
- ❖ Gain Science Council Employer Champion Award
- ❖ Annual Conference and Awards

- ❖ Produce career pathways for the major job families
- ❖ Establish Communities of Practice
- ❖ 'Grow our own' - Apprenticeships

- ❖ Agree scope and definition of Technician Community.
- ❖ Undertake a survey to map skills and capabilities

Technician Commitment 4 Key areas: V – Visibility; R – Recognition; C – Career Development, S - Sustainability

	Purpose	Activity	Impact	Who	V	R	C	S
Understand	Understand the current skills and capabilities of Technicians across UCL.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree scope and definition of Technician Community. Undertake a survey to map skills and capabilities 	Alignment of technical capability with requirements of research and education strategies. (Evidence: Technician Commitment recognised in Research Strategy; Progress of action plan monitored by Research & Innovation Operations Oversight Board)	VP Research, Deans, Technician Commitment Working Group	X			X
Develop	Fostering greater clarity, cohesion and continuous improvement, the technical communities of practice will bring together colleagues working in similar practice areas from across UCL.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up communities of practice related to technical staff Reviewing our learning and development portfolio 	For each COP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater understanding of skills and training needs Increase in provision and sign posting of training courses and workshops and in-house CPD Greater knowledge and skills sharing (Evidence: Report from COP Manager)	Head of Community of Practice, COP leads, Workstream Leads	X		X	X
Develop	Technician specific professional career paths/frameworks which clearly document progression opportunities	Working with the National Technician Development Centre, produce structured career pathways for the major job families in the Technical Communities of Practice.	For each COP: Greater clarity of career progression. (Evidence from Career Pathway Advisory Groups)	COP Sponsor/Head of Career Pathways/COP Leads		X	X	X

	Purpose	Activity	Impact	Who	V	R	C	S
Develop	Succession planning for key skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workforce planning Opening up earlier career entry points via apprentices Apprenticeship levy used to develop existing staff Job shadowing and rotational training programmes 	Develop new capabilities required for research and education Increase supply of staff in skill shortage areas (Evidence: from COP Sponsors; Research & Innovation Operations Oversight Board)	OD/Heads of HR/Technician Commitment Working Group			X	X
Value	Facilitate formal professional recognition and regular continuous professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UCL to gain Science Council Employer Champion award in recognition of the support given to technical staff to gain professional registration. A consistent policy that where technicians have contributed to research outputs and grants, they are named as authors 	University level support for technicians gaining professional recognition. (Evidence: UCL policy to support professional recognition)	OD/ COP Sponsors	X	X	X	
Value	Celebrate and show case achievements by Technical staff at UCL.	Annual Technician Conference and awards ceremony	Greater engagement and job satisfaction of technician community (Evidence: staff survey/ COP survey; Internal award schemes recognise the contribution of technical staff; Nominations to external award schemes that recognise the contribution of technical staff)	OD/ COP Sponsors/Head of COP	X	X		

Please evidence how the ‘technician voice’ was present in the development and formation of the institutional action plan:

This interim self-assessment and 24-month action plan has been produced in consultation with the following members of the Technician Commitment Working Group:

Name	Title	Faculty
John Bowles	Head of Laboratories	MAPS
Dr Dimitra Stamogiannou	Departmental Administrator	MAPS
Dr Roger Woodliffe	Computer Services Manager	MAPS
Dr Steve Bunting	Institute Manager	Brain Sciences
Dr Jacques Gianino	Manager	Brian Sciences
Peter Kelly	Departmental Superintendent	Engineering Science
Ian Seaton	Technical Resources Manager	Engineering Science
Isabel Goncalves	Departmental Laboratory Manager	Life Sciences
Dr Lisa Sanderson	Teaching Laboratory Manager	Life Sciences
Prupti Malde	Unit Manager Cruciform Teaching Facilities	Life Sciences

The action plan was also informed by contributions made at a recent HEaTED networking event attended by over 75 UCL Technical Managers.

Group membership will increase in late 2018 to include representation from Medical Sciences and Social and Historical Science.

Please confirm that your Technician Commitment status and action plan is published on your organisation’s website and provide the relevant URL here: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/human-resources/learning-development/opportunities-technical-staff>

Signed: Fiona Ryland (Technician Commitment Nominated Institutional Lead)

Date: 31 October 2018