|  |
| --- |
| London’s Global University |



# Technician Commitment Self-Assessment Stage 2

UCL is unique on the breath and complexity of its world-leading research, enabled by its technical community.

Research and Teaching Technical Professionals (RTTP) perform a critical role in conducting research, delivering education, innovation, sharing knowledge and contributing to health and safety and sustainability practices. There are currently over 1,200 RTTP staff at UCL ranging between grades 4-10 dependent on their roles and responsibilities. This community adds value by providing technical skills and experience, often unique to their role, which grows in scope and complexity over time. RTTP staff also include Research Professionals: pools of highly qualified research and innovation staff who enable, contribute to and support research through advanced skills.

There is a significant threat to the attraction and retention of RTTPs and UCL is at risk of losing critical skills required to conduct research, deliver education, innovate and share knowledge. UCL competitors have made significant strides in mitigating this risk by establishing new technical strategy leadership positions, implementing career pathways, promoting apprenticeship schemes, and improving the recognition and visibility of technical staff within the organisation.

In October 2018, UCL signed the Technician Commitment and in 2020 the Technical Staff Project commenced in UCL, with the aim to progress the 2018 Technician Commitment’s Action Plan and lay a foundation of active technical staff working groups and platforms that could develop initiatives in line with the Technician Commitment.

Since then, The Technical Managers Group (TMG) have influenced the priorities and workstreams that The Technical Staff Project (2020-2022) was delivering. The Technical Futures Staff survey was delivered with 491 respondents completing the survey and UCL Organisational development (OD) started to develop a Career Framework for Technical Professionals.

The next phase, i.e., Stage 2, consists of two workstreams, transitioning the Technician Commitment work to Business as Usual (BAU), to be overseen by the Technical Managers Group (TMG), and the development of an institution wide strategy for technical staff and research professionals to be overseen by the institutional technical function lead.

To preserve our technical skills and maximise this potential, our priority must be to evolve a RTTP staff strategy that delivers to the specific strategic enablers of (1) enabling excellent research and innovation, and (2) recruiting, retaining and developing diverse talent.

Building on the work of the Technician Commitment project, Researcher Concordat and the “Professional Services staff as part of UCL’s Scholarly Community” paper, the next phase is to develop an institution wide strategic plan for RTTPs, overseen by a Working Group representative of the RTTP community, including members from the Technical Managers Group (TMG), Advanced Research Computing (ARC), UCL East, Biological Services and Organisational Development (OD). UCL East and ARC have volunteered ~~to be used~~ to pilot any schemes for teaching and research professionals respectively. Technical Professional schemes will also be piloted in areas highlighted as at high-risk for low retention and recruitment during phase 2.

Biological Services will provide project management and project support funded for one year by the VP (Operations) Office and will continue to support the project into BAU once this piece of work concludes.

# Building up from the work done in Phase 2 and looking into starting Phase 3

In January, 2023, a Technical Staff Programme Manager secondment post was created to lead the actions related to UCL's Action plan for the Technician Commitment with the help of the TMG. Consequently, the ‘Technical Skills Development Hub (TSDH)’ was created, and with the end of the Programme Manager Secondment, the TSDH will lead the Technical Staff initiatives, connecting the community with internal and external stakeholders with visibility, recognition, career progression and sustainability at the core of the Hub’s initiatives.

**Strategic Priorities**

* Provide an organisational ‘home’ for Research and Teaching, Technical Professionals at UCL
* Attract and retain the very best technical talent required to fulfil our academic mission.
* Sustainable and fulfilling technical careers.
* Improved research, innovation, and teaching outcomes.
* High quality service delivery.
* All laboratories practicing sustainable science.

**Key Stakeholders (this is not an exhaustive list)**

**Internal to UCL**

* Technical Managers Group (TMG)
* Faculty Technical Lead/Head of Technical Services
* ARC (Advanced Research Computing Centre)
* ISD (Information Services Division)
* UCL Research Culture
* Faculties’ Directors of Operations (DoOs)
* UCL academic’s community
* Technical Community
* UCL Organisational Development

**External to UCL**

* The UK Institute for Technical Skills and Strategy (ITSS).
* National Technician Development Centre (NTDC).
* Higher Education and Technician Educational Development (HEaTED).
* Science Council.
* Engineering Council.
* Midlands Innovation Talent (MI Talent).
* Gatsby foundation.
* UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).
* Office for Students (OfS).
* Institute of Apprenticeships & Technical Education
* Institute of Science and Technology (IST).
* The Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET).
* London and SE TCI Leads group.
* UK Technical Specialist Network (TSN).
* UK Technical Managers in Universities (TMU).
* Science Museum.
* Other Professional Bodies

# Progress to date

* Definition for the RTTP category has been agreed by HR (Appendix 1)
* A draft high-level organisational chart has been developed illustrating the location of 1,018 RTTPs staff within the organisation. This has been shared with departments to allow them to validate the data.
* Due to the different ways HR define technical roles, generating a comprehensive list of all current RTTP staff has been a challenge. Many Directors of Operations (DoO) have agreed that with time the uncaptured RTTP staff will align with a career pathway and help refine the definition of RTTP staff to develop an all-encompassing list.
* Revised TMG membership to represent the entire RTTP community.
* The TMG now leading on all ongoing and future initiatives towards the improvement of Visibility, Recognition, Career Development and Sustainability of Technicians as part of the transition to Business as Usual (BAU).
* For the new ‘Technical Professionals Career Framework’, job families have been established in a way to reflect the way Technical Professionals operate, which differs from the existing Professional Services Career Frameworks.
* Career Frameworks at other HE Institutions have been designed using graded job families. This approach allows easy navigation for staff to find the job family with similar responsibilities, irrespective of their technical specialism to align to. Using the framework, they can assess what knowledge, skills and experience is required for progression.
* The Phase 2 Senior Sponsor Group (who are responsible for the official sign-off on the career framework) have been presented with suggestions, and a proposal of how the framework can be developed.
* All this work has been led by UCL’s Director of Career Development working together with collaboration of RTTPs at various grades, and with the support of the recently established ‘Technical Skills Development Hub (TSDH) and UCL’s Technical Managers Group (TMG).
* An UCL Technical Skills Development Hub (TSDH) has being established.

**Appendix 1: Phase 1 RAG (Red, Amber, Green) Analysis.**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Technician Commitment Key area** | **Activity** | **Evidence** | **RAG** |
| Visibility; Sustainability | Agree scope and definition of technician community. | UCL now uses the term RTTP (Research and Teaching Technical Professionals) |  |
| Visibility; Sustainability | Undertake a survey to map skills andCapabilities. | NTDC Skills survey done in 2021 and report published at the end of 2023 |  |
| Visibility; Sustainability; Career Development | Set up communities of practice related to technical staff. | Two communities of practice (CoP) have been set: Engineering Technical Staff and Research ITApart from CoP, we also have two networks: Lab Tech Network and Technical Managers Group – TMGWe are aiming to set another two CoP: Teaching technicians and STP (Science Technology Platforms) Professionals |  |
| Sustainability; Career Development | Reviewing our learning and development portfolio with a greater understanding of skills and training needs. | A one stop shop for Technical Professionals Learning and Development has been set up and is located on SharePoint |  |
| Recognition, Career Development, Sustainability  | Develop technician specific professional career paths/frameworks which clearly document progression opportunities. | A Career Framework for Technical Professionals have been developed with publication scheduled for Jan/2024 |  |
| Career Development, Sustainability | Workforce planning, opening earlier career entry points via apprentices, apprenticeship levy used to develop existing staff, job shadowing and rotational training programmes | Still ongoing, however flagged as a priority for the newly formed Technical Skills Development Hub (TSDH) |  |
| Visibility, Recognition, Career Development | UCL to gain Science Council Employer Champion award.  | Award achieved in July 2022 (<https://sciencecouncil.org/blog/2022/08/02/ucl-become-our-latest-employer-champion/> ) |  |
| Visibility, Recognition | A consistent policy that where technicians have contributed to research outputs and grants, they are named as authors.  | A guideline has been created by a working group from TMG. The document is being reviewed by UCL Research Culture and after that will be sent to RIGE (UCL Research Innovation and Global Engagement) for advice about appropriate governance |  |
| Visibility, Recognition | Annual Technician Conference and awards ceremony  | The inaugural ‘Technical Staff Showcase 2023’ was delivered with great success on 30th March 2023. The second showcase event will be delivered on 12th April 2024. A ‘Technical Professional of the Year Award’ will be part of the Showcase event in April 2024. The award ceremony might also announce the RTTPs who obtained their professional registration in the past year.  |  |

Appendix 2: Action Plan 2024-2025.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Theme | Actions | Key Stakeholders |
| Visibility, Recognition, Career Development and Sustainability | Establish the recently created Technical Skills Development Hub (TSDH), by hiring a manager and developing a Strategy Document | Vice President Operations (VP OPS), Senior Sponsors, Technical Staff function institutional lead |
| Sustainability | Move the Technician Commitment to Business as usual (BAU), led by the technical staff function and supported by the TSDH and TMG | Technical Staff institutional function lead, TSDH and TMG |
| Recognition, Career Development, Sustainability, Visibility.  | Develop an EDI technical group | TSDH. UCL EDI |
| Career development, Sustainability | Work with OD to improve UCL’s training opportunities uptake by technical professionals | TSDH, UCL OD |
| Career development, Sustainability | Develop ‘Learning Pathways’ document/guideline in line with the four job families for technical professionals (Research, Education, Enterprise and external Engagement and General Workshop and Laboratory services)  | TMG, Academics, TSDH, DoOs |
| Career development, Sustainability | Work with UCL HR to improve recruitment and retention, workforce planning, opening earlier career entry points via apprentices, apprenticeship levy used to develop existing staff, job shadowing and rotational training programmes | TSDH, HR, Apprenticeship manager, TMG |
| Recognition and Visibility | Launch a guideline on authorship/fair attribution for publications | TSDH, TMG, UCL Research Culture |