

## Technician Commitment: Stage 3 Self-Assessment

### Evaluating Impact through Self-Assessment & Future Action Planning

**Organisation:** The Open University

**Name of Institutional Lead:** Dr Barbara Kunz (OU Technician Commitment Lead) and Dr Zoë Ayres\* (Head of Laboratory Facilities). \*Note: Dr Julia Barkans appointed as interim lead during maternity leave.

**E-mail:** barbara.kunz@open.ac.uk

**Contact Number:** 01908 332553

**(1) 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 Open University's mission is to be open to people, places, methods, and ideas. It provides distance learning and therefore there is not a permanent cohort of undergraduates on site.

Our technical team support research activities, postgraduate students, on campus practical sessions and experimentation for students to access remotely.

The Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) technicians comprise specialist Analytical Project Officers, Technical Project Officers, Laboratory Technicians and Laboratory Managers, all of whom play a vital role in the delivery of research and teaching excellence.

Our remit is extended to support the OpenSTEM laboratories which provides practical teaching in aspects of STEM to the distance learning community. Using remotely accessible hardware for laboratory and exploratory studies ranging from electronics to chemical synthesis and from microscopes to telescopes, students can access the various instruments and other remote-controlled resources virtually anytime from anywhere with an internet connection.

We also deliver optional on-site schools to deliver practical skills to students.

#### **Number of technicians in the organisation and where they are based**

A team of 65 technical support staff:

1 Head of Laboratory Facilities

9 Laboratory Managers (covering the six Schools, H&S and Commercialisation)

7 in the School of Life Health and Chemical Sciences

3 in Electron Microscopy

10 in the School of Environment, Earth, and Ecosystem Sciences

9 in Astrobiology

14 in the School of Engineering and Innovation

12 in the School of Physical Sciences

Grade	Apprentice level	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9
# staff	6	2	4	11	31	9	2

## Governance

The University's Academic Governance Structure is headed by the Senate.

The technical staff are led by the Head of Laboratory Facilities located within the Professional Services of the STEM Faculty and reports to the Director of Strategy, Planning & Resources.

The Head of Laboratory Facilities is a member of

- The Faculty Senior Management Team (STEM Executive)
- STEM Research and Enterprise Committee
- University Health and Safety Committee

The STEM Executive comprise Executive Dean, Heads of School, Director, Head of staffing, Head of Curriculum Delivery, Head of Technical Services, Head of Business Development and Head of Laboratory Facilities. The Exec meets every two weeks to discuss the implementation of Faculty Strategy. In addition, the Exec team have a weekly briefing with the Dean focusing on operational matters, including laboratory facilities.

The Head of Laboratory Facilities has every opportunity to ensure that the 'technician voice' is present in the development and formation of institutional action plans.

The Head of Laboratory Facilities meets formally once a month with the Laboratory Managers. Notes from the Executive meetings, Research and Enterprise Committee and the Technicians Steering Group are included in the Chairs report to ensure dissemination.

Regular Team Meetings chaired by the Laboratory Managers for their individual teams encourage discussion which is in turn are fed back into the monthly Lab Managers meeting and if appropriate to STEM Executive.

## Resources

In addition to funding technical registration with the Science Council and other professional bodies, the faculty also funds ongoing professional fees and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for its technicians. CPD is discussed at annual appraisal and the Head of Laboratory Facilities applies to the Staff Development fund accordingly.

**(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?**

A change that has occurred due to the Technician Commitment initiative is there is now a “Technician Commitment Working Group” created to help give voice to technicians and improve support being provided. This working group is comprised of 7 technical staff, with representatives from all Schools. We have opted for a “nothing about us without us” approach, ensuring that the working group is led by technicians. As part of this, Dr Barbara Kunz has been appointed as the internal lead of the OU Technician Commitment, supported by the Head of Laboratory Facilities.

In order to support Technician Commitment, work internally, and ensure ambitions are realised, a couple of senior management and academic staff members support the Working Group. However, to ensure consistency and ongoing support we aim to create a Technician Commitment Steering Group, comprised of senior academics, in positions to influence and enact change has been created.

Support for staff development has increased. For example, supporting staff members to attend IST Conference, and signing up to HeaTED membership, for access to specific training for technical staff.

We have also established an ongoing relationship with Cranfield University to mutually explore opportunities to support technical staff at both institutions, including the possibility of future shared award evenings and secondment opportunities.

***We decided to combine section 3 and 4 and provide the RAG analysis together with evidence of impact.***

**(3) 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) which are still to be carried out (RED). Please provide an explanation for those categorised as red.**

**(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).**

Progress by the OU on the last 36-month action plan is detailed below, focusing on the our key areas: visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability of skills.

## **VISIBILITY**

**Aim:** Ensure that technicians within the organisation are identifiable and that the contribution of technicians is visible within and beyond the institution.

**Technician roles have clear job descriptions (RATING: AMBER)**

Work has been conducted on ensuring technician roles have clear job descriptions and responsibilities. “Professionally registered or working towards professional registration” has been added to all job descriptions in the “Desirable” section to ensure that professional registration is being considered.

There is further work to do in this area. The STEM Faculty is currently undergoing a Professional Services Review, and as part of this process, how technician career advancement can be supported is being reviewed. The aim is to explore how best practice at other institutions around “Job Families” for example at the [University of Warwick](#), and explore how we may enact similar at the OU.

**Technicians to continue to feature in organisation prospectuses and marketing materials (RATING: AMBER)**

Plans are being explored to create celebratory case studies for display on the STEM OU social media channels (Twitter and Facebook). This is still in progress. A success has been celebrating our Apprentices (see below for more information).

**Technicians present on decision-making committees where appropriate (RATING: AMBER)**

The main reporting structure to decision making committees is through representation by the Head of Laboratory Facilities. Technicians provide expertise and guidance through committees such as the “Green Group” focusing on sustainability challenges.

**Technicians visible in costing mechanisms for research grants (GREEN)**

Buy-out for technical staff time on research grants is now fully integrated into OU’s research grant internal application process (AMS). Before grants are given internal approval, technical staff time must be approved by the Head of Laboratory Facilities. This enables staffing to be accurately costed and acts to ensure that technical staff contributions are being recognised.

**A vibrant and active 'Technician Network' (RATING: AMBER)**



Work is still ongoing in this area to bring the technical staff together, who span several Schools. Both within local areas, and as a Faculty we engage in activities to connect, from craft days to the regular Tech Tea (occurring once monthly pre-pandemic) to bring technical staff together.

*Members of the technical staff at a social event to network across the faculty.*

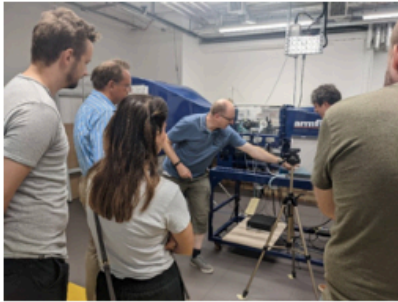
**Films/images showcasing technicians (RATING: RED)**

This ambition has not progressed. A decision was made to pause work in this area in order to prioritise others, but this is to be considered as an area of focus for our next action plan.

**Technicians present and active in careers, outreach and widening participation activities (RATING: GREEN)**

Our technical staff are involved in a range of outreach and career activities. We have had a range of Work Experience students (age 16-18) come in and work in the laboratories. Technical staff also participate in outreach activities in local schools and events like ([Soapbox Science](#)).

We also ran a "Family and Friends Outreach Day", funded by the Royal Society of Chemistry, to enable the family and friends of technical staff at the OU to come on to site, learn about what we do, and get hands-on with science. The aims were two-fold, to:



**STEM Lab Support Team’s Friends and Family Day**

When your work is predominantly lab and research based, it can often be tricky to explain to your nearest and dearest what you actually do for a living!

This is why members of the Open University’s STEM Lab Support Team decided to showcase some of the amazing things we get up to and host a special Friends and Family Day. The event, sponsored by the Royal Society of Chemistry Outreach Fund, welcomed over 60 visitors to Walton Hall. Guests were treated to ‘behind the scenes’ tours of several labs, including the Open Engineering suite and the Living Lab, as well as having the opportunity to take part in fun experiments such as extracting strawberry DNA and sieving for microfossils!

Everyone had a fabulous time and we have received plenty of positive feedback – ‘Well organised day! Lovely for family to share child’s/parent’s workplace and explore what happens there’ – which means we are already planning what we will do next year!

*Dr Camilla Maya Wilkinson (on behalf of the Friends and Family Day Committee)*

- Engage with public audiences, particularly the younger generation who may now find the confidence to pursue rewarding scientific careers.

- Reward our technical staff for their hard work and to promote well-being by creating an atmosphere of family amongst the wider technical team.

This event was highly successful, with significant interest in a repeat event for the following year. The grant application for funding was also led by a lab manager, providing an opportunity to be involved in securing external funding. One member of the technical team wrote a short article about it in the STEM Newsletter (see below).

**Technician exhibition/poster events showcasing skills, talent, and research (RATING: RED)**

This ambition has not progressed. However, they are renewed plans in our next action plan.

**Apply for funding to support a technical conference to highlight expertise and equipment available to research in the STEM Faculty (RATING: AMBER)**

This ambition has not yet been realised and needs more time to enact. However, technicians have actively contributed at other technical conferences organised by other institutions.

**Continue to encourage Technicians to contribute articles to STEM weekly newsletter (RATING: GREEN)**

Technical staff are routinely encouraged to contribute their articles to the STEM weekly newsletter.

Examples include:



### Lab apprentices pass with flying colours

Huge congratulations go to two of our lab apprentices, Weronika Rojek and Josh Summerfield, who have both completed their courses and passed with distinction.

Both Weronika and Josh started their apprenticeships in 2022 and have worked really hard to achieve success.

Ceri Gwyther, Weronika's manager told us, *"Microbiology Technician Apprentice Weronika was incredibly shy at the assessment centre, but with clear potential and interest in biology. Now she picks up tasks given her with ease, has worked hard on assignments, and slotted in neatly with the team. It has been a privilege to watch her progress. The change during her 18 months with us is incredible, she is a prime example of what apprenticeships are all about – developing people and giving them confidence to work independently."*

Josh's manager Igor Kraev was equally complimentary, *"Josh has been enthusiastic about his role since day one, demonstrating a proactive approach in daily tasks. Given that our instructions were initially tailored for experienced lab users, Josh experienced problems following those, but he didn't give up. We collaborated closely to provide the necessary support and his persistent hard work paid off; he passed his end point assessment with distinction. Today, he has become a confident lab user upon whom both I and the rest of the team trust and rely on. It's been a pleasure working alongside Josh, and I extend my best wishes for his continued success in his future career."*

Extra congratulations go to Weronika who interviewed successfully for the G5 Research Technician in Astrobiology last week and will be joining them as a full time employee at the end of March.

Josh is hoping to apply for a G5 Chemistry technician position coming up soon.

Brett Keith | Laboratory Manager



### Sustainability/My Green Lab

We have received certification from My Green Lab for the Ecosystems labs, at an excellent gold status. Even better, both Microbiology/Astrobiology and the EM Suite who both got the best possible outcome of a green rating! We are delighted to join a community of labs that have been My Green Lab certified.

While we often work on research relevant to environmental issues, lab operations themselves can be very difficult to operate sustainably. Typically, labs use 5 to 10 times more energy than office spaces, 5 times more water (per area), and labs worldwide generate 5.5 million tonnes of plastic waste (or 116 Titanic cruise liners). To counter this, we are making deliberate and ongoing changes to decrease the environmental footprint of our research by joining the #MyGreenLabCertification Program run by non profit [My Green Lab](#). This involves a thorough online assessment of our lab practices, equipment, waste, and procurement. Recognized by the United Nations Race to Zero campaign as a key measure of progress towards a zero-carbon future, My Green Lab Certification is considered the gold standard for laboratory sustainability best practices around the world. More information about this program can be found at [www.mygreenlab.org/green-lab-certification](http://www.mygreenlab.org/green-lab-certification)

It doesn't end here though, we continue to improve and will need to re-certify in 2 years' time.

Graham Howell | Laboratory Manager (Ecosystems)

## Instigate Technical SharePoint Site (RATING: RED)

This ambition has not progressed. A decision was made to pause work in this area in order to prioritise others, but this will be reconsidered in the future.

## Promote a Mental Health agenda in the technical community to include sessions on mental health and wellbeing, mental health awareness, mental health first aid (RATING: GREEN)

Several of the technical team are now trained Mental Health First Aiders. The Faculty has introduced a STEM Wellbeing Team who puts on relevant sessions. A tailored session on Technician Mental Health would be welcomed and is something to explore.

## RECOGNITION

**Aim:** Support technicians to gain recognition through professional registration

## Continue to communicate the opportunity to become professionally registered to technical staff (RATING: GREEN)

There has been a push to encourage the technical team to become professionally registered, and assigned budget to assist with this. Seven members of the technical team are professionally registered with eleven staff members working towards registration at the moment.

**Internal award schemes recognise the contribution of technical staff (RATING: GREEN)**

Dr Simona Nicoara Project Officer in Physical Sciences won the 2022 OU Research Excellence Award in the category 'Best Technician/Best Technical Team'. Three other members of the STEM technical team were shortlisted showing the strong commitment to excellence among the OU's technicians.

In 2022 and 2023 three individual technical staff members and two technical teams received a STEM Recognising Excellence award for 'Support for Teaching, Research, Scholarship and Enterprise'



Furthermore, several technical staff have been recognised internally with the STEM Faculty GEM awards for their contributions over the past three years.

**Nominations to external award schemes that recognise the contribution of technical staff (RATING: GREEN)**

There has been a concerted effort to put technical staff forward for external award schemes, for example, the new Royal Society Chemistry Technical Excellence Prizes, THE 'Outstanding Technician of the Year' and other opportunities.

The OpenSTEM Labs recently won the Queen's Anniversary Prize (2023) where the contributions of the OpenSTEM labs team was recognised.

**The OpenSTEM Labs wins a Queen's Anniversary Prize**



We're delighted to announce that the OpenSTEM Labs have been awarded a Queen's Anniversary Prize!

Granted every two years by The Monarch, the Queen's Anniversary Prizes recognise outstanding, innovative work by UK colleges and universities that deliver real benefit to the wider world through education and training. The Prizes are the highest national Honour awarded in UK further and higher education.

Founded in 2013, our world-leading, multi-award-winning OpenSTEM Labs are changing the way scientists and engineers of the future are educated by making authentic laboratory

experiences possible online, and at scale.

Members of the technical team have won a range of prizes over the last year, including:





Dr Zeeshan Mughal (on the left), Project Officer in Electron Microscopy, winning 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize in RMS International Scientific Imaging Competition 2023. His winning image can be found [here](#).

**An institutional policy that ensures that technicians have recognition on research outputs (RATING: GREEN)**

The OU have created a “Fair Attribution Policy” to ensure that technical staff are recognised in research outputs. Regular reminders are circulated about this. In the last 3 years technical staff have been named authors on more than 35 publications and acknowledged in more than eight publications.

**Technician Newsletter (RATING: RED)**

This ambition has not progressed. We decided to encourage technical staff to contribute to the general STEM newsletter which gets weekly circulated to approx.. 2000 staff members.

**CAREER DEVELOPMENT**

**Aim:** Enable career progression opportunities for technicians through the provision of clear, documented career pathways

**Dedicated webpage showcasing case studies of technician careers (RATING: RED)**

This ambition has not progressed. A decision was made to pause work in this area in order to prioritise others, but this will be reconsidered in the future.

**Development of a Technician Commitment webpage, which showcases case studies (RATING: AMBER)**

We have very recently integrated a Technician Commitment subpage within the existing OU’s STEM research homepage to highlight some of the progress and achievements. We hope in the future to expand on this.

**Dedicated technical training provision (RATING: GREEN)**

In two cohorts 23 technical staff members have been awarded the National Certificate in Occupational Health and Safety (NEBOSH). Holders of this accredited qualification can identify, evaluate and control a wide range of workplace hazards. The qualification encourages a pragmatic approach to managing risk and covers the legal requirements for

health and safety in the UK. The dedication of technical staff to undertake such training indicates STEM's commitment to providing a safe working environment for all lab users. Furthermore, staff have attended a range of specialist training from GC-MS training to Swagelok fitting, DNA sequencing as well as other H&S courses (Biological Safety, Laser Safety, Radiation Safety, etc.)

### **Mentors for technicians (RATING: GREEN)**

In the last year, a STEM mentoring scheme has been established within the Faculty, with technical staff both contributing as mentors and attending as mentees.

#### **STEM Mentoring Scheme**

The STEM Mentoring Scheme has been running for well over a year now, and we have successfully matched a number of people who were looking for a mentor. We still have trained mentors **now**, ready and waiting to support you, including Central Academics, Staff Tutors, Technical and Professional Services Staff in a variety of roles and at a variety of levels. To learn more about the scheme from those who have participated already, [head to our intranet page where we have a short video explaining more about the scheme.](#)



### **Career development and professional registration workshops (RATING: GREEN)**

This is an area that as a Faculty we have invested heavily in (see above on technical training & registration for more details). Additionally technical staff are supported to participate in a range of training for career development, and professional registration workshops. Examples include:

- Three members of the technical team took part in the Herschel Programme for Women in Technical Leadership.
- One member has taken part in the Aurora Leadership training.

### **Set up a database of to formally collate and record training and development activity (RATING: AMBER)**

Work is in progress to create a full training matrix for professional service staff. This has been achieved for lab managers but needs to be further extended out to the wider laboratory technical team. A full record of professional registration including who is working towards chartership is now in place.

**Promote secondment opportunities both within the faculty and externally (RATING: AMBER)**

Multiple staff members have taken secondment opportunities internally, getting experience in different skills. For example, seconding out from lab-based work to get commercial experience.

**Continue rotation of core technicians within the faculty (RATING: RED)**

This ambition has not progressed. A decision was made to pause work in this area in order to prioritise others, but this will be reconsidered in the future. It is hoped that with continuing work around “job families” this may enable improved opportunities for rotation.

**Identify and record development requirements at annual CDSA (RATING: GREEN)**

We have a well-established “Career Development and Staff Appraisal (CDSA) system where technical staff can outline their wants and needs regarding development requirements. This provides a mechanism to ensure that staff are receiving development opportunities.

## **FUTURE SUSTAINABILITY OF TECHNICAL SKILLS**

**Aim:** Ensure sustainability of technical skills across the organisation and that technical expertise is fully utilised

**Utilisation of the Apprenticeship Levy to train and upskill existing staff (RATING: GREEN)**

We have established a successful relationship with TIRO, a leading recruitment and training provider for apprenticeships in the UK. Since 2019, five apprentices have completed their studies at the OU, all achieving distinction, and two are currently in learning at the OU.

**Retain existing apprentices where possible (RATING: AMBER)**

Of the apprentices that have completed their studies with us, three have gone on to have jobs in the OU technical team. More work needs to be done in this area to ensure retention.

**Promote the STEM apprentice journey during apprentice week (RATING: GREEN)**

SCIENCE, MATHS, COMPUTING AND TECHNOLOGY

Meet the OU apprentices readying to take the science industry by storm

By Laura Bandell — February 6, 2024



Weronika Rojek, OU lab apprentice

To celebrate this year's **National Apprenticeship Week** (5-11 February 2024), we spoke to The Open University's (OU) Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) apprentices who are working and training in the university's labs.

Through a partnership with training provider **Tiro**, the OU provides the employer-led side of laboratory training on site in Milton Keynes.

We continue to champion apprenticeships with our partners TIRO. For Apprenticeship week 2024, we ran a campaign highlighting the work of our apprentices to celebrate their achievements.

**Encourage staff to take advantage of the half day training in other areas. This will ensure they have skills beyond their immediate expertise if new positions come up (RATING: GREEN)**

As a unit, we have actively encouraged and supported training outside of immediate need, this includes management training for those not yet in leadership roles.

Technical staff also take an active role in Health and Safety, many of which are First Aiders, Fire Marshalls or Mental Health First Aiders.

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

Based on the TALENT Commission "Technical skills, roles and careers in UK higher education and research" Report, the Open University have achieved the following against the recommendations as detailed below:

(R1) In 2019 we appointed our first three apprentices to invest in a new pipeline of technical talent. The second cohort is currently finishing their apprenticeship. Out of the five apprentices who have finished their training four have been able to secure a follow-up role, two of them on a permanent basis. The STEM faculty has a Director for Strategy, Planning and Resources, who works with the Head of Laboratory Services and the lab manager team to take a strategic approach to the sustainability of technical skills and careers (see organisational structure described above).

(R2) Only limited progress has been made to address the blurring of boundaries between technical and academic roles. We have included ambitions to improve this into our next 36-month action plan.

(R3) The collection, reporting and analysis of technical staff data is an area where improvement is needed. We hope to be able to centralise some of our training records and do a skill audit (see 36-month action plan).

(R4) Both the OU as a whole and the STEM Faculty place great value in addressing EDI challenges. The university holds a Bronze Athena Swan award, and all STEM Schools have individual awards, with two Bronze and five Silver. Furthermore, the OU is a member of the Race Equality Charter working on a submission for a Bronze Award. Only limited progress has been made in addressing technical staff specific EDI challenges. However, as of 2024, a member of the technical team is part of the Athena Swan Self-Assessment team.

(R5) This is an action from our previous action plan and technical staff time on research grants is fully integrated into our research grant internal application process (AMS). Technical staff time is approved by the Head of Laboratory Facilities to ensure staffing is accurately costed. We see scope for improving the opportunities for technical staff to apply for grants themselves (see 36-month action plan).

(R6) Outreach and opportunities are an integral part of the OU's mission. This also translates to our technical staff who are regularly involved in outreach activities. They range from supporting work experience students (age 16-18), local school visits and events like [Soapbox Science](#) or Science Festivals. We also ran a successful "Family and Friends Outreach Day" last year, which was attended by 66 guests, of which 15 were children under the age of 18. The program offered a general introduction to the STEM Laboratory Facilities, seven different lab tours ranging from chemistry, microbiology, physics, engineering, electron microscopy, the living lab and sedimentology, followed by a lunch with research and educational posters.

(R7) Our technical staff at the OU comes from both a vocational and academic pathway. The STEM Faculty set up its own Apprentice Programme in 2019 and since then has seen five of the seven Apprentices finish their training with us. We also offer placement opportunities and have made good experience with it.

(R8) At the OU the Lab Managers are working closely with HR and the Head of Laboratory Facilities to draft technical role profiles. Furthermore, technical staff are part of every technical recruitment panel and everyone who is taking part in interviews is required to complete the unconscious bias training.

(R9) Career Pathways have not yet been a focus of activities. Outlined in our new 36-month action plan we aim to address this by looking at best practices across the sector and implement a clear Technical Career Progression Pathway.

(R10) Technical staff at the OU have a spectrum of professional development opportunities. The STEM Faculty offers a mentor program (see above) open for technical staff both as a mentee and as a mentor. Several members of staff are professionally registered or working towards it. Additionally, a range of internal and external technical training programs are on offer. Technical staff in leadership positions or aspiring technical leaders are encouraged

to take part in leadership training (e.g. Aurora, Herschel or Vivien Thomas Programs). We are aware that uptake of those opportunities is highly variable which seems to be similar to others in the sector.

(R11) We have developed a Fair Attribution Policy in 2020. However, the awareness and implementation of the policy for technical staff and academic staff could be improved. We aim to update our policy in the near future and start an awareness campaign (see 36-month action plan). In some Schools, where appropriate, technical staff are formally part of supervision teams. Overall visibility and reconditions of technical staff across the STEM Faculty and university could be improved and we have suggested a number of activities in our latest 36-month action plan.

(R12) Our Head of Laboratory Facilities is a member of five decision-making committees dealing with University and Faculty facilities to ensure the technical staff voice is represented and heard. Yet, we think this is an area where we could improve and have a more diverse (in terms of background and grade) range of technical staff represented in appropriate committees. In our 36-month action plan, we outline ideas for getting technical staff more engaged and embedded in committees and the wider university business to increase representation.

(R13) The OU has partnered with TIRO in 2018 to create a Level 3 technical apprenticeship programme. This has proved highly successful, and the second cohort of apprentices are currently completing their apprenticeships.

(R14) This recommendation primarily addresses government policymakers.

(R15) We have worked hard on creating an environment where technicians engage with the opportunities available to them. Similar to the overall experience across the sector this is challenging in some areas more than others. We hope to increase technicians' engagement again for example with our new opportunity for the Technical Staff Network between the OU and Cranfield University.

(R16) We encourage our technical staff, through Career Development discussions with line-managers, to take part in events from the UK Institute for Technical Skills & Strategy to benefit from the opportunities created for the technical community.

**(6) 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.**


The OU's next 36-month action plan is available in **Appendix 1** to demonstrate our continued affirmation of the Technician Commitment and providing support for our technical staff. We opted for a "nothing about us without us" approach to the action plan, with the Technician Commitment Working Group (comprised of technical staff) devising the action plan. To provide support, and ensure success, members of the STEM faculty's senior leadership team in collaboration with the institutional lead provided guidance and feedback on the action plan. The Head of Laboratory Facilities and the Technician Commitment Working Group will work together with the various stakeholders on the activities set in the Action Plan.


**(7) 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:**

This self-assessment report and the 36-month action plan have been uploaded to the OU's STEM Research webpage:

<https://stem.open.ac.uk/research/technician-commitment>

The documents have been circulated via email to all our technical staff. Furthermore, the report submission will be published to the wider Faculty and University via a number of news and communications channels.

Signed:   
Dr Barbara Kunz (Project Officer LA-ICP-MS)  
(Technician Commitment Nominated Institutional Lead)  
Date: 17/07/2024

Signed:   
Prof. Nicholas Braithwaite (STEM Exec Dean)  
(Technician Commitment Signatory - Leader of Institution)  
Date: 05/07/2024

Signed:   
Prof. Kevin Shakesheff (Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research & Innovation)  
(Technician Commitment Signatory - Leader of Institution)  
Date: 15/07/2024