TECHNICIAN COMMITMENT

24 MONTH ACTION PLAN

January 2025 - January 2027

TECHNICIAN COMMITMENT

In March 2024 Birmingham City University signed up to a sector-wide initiative called 'The Technician Commitment'. This initiative aims to ensure visibility, recognition, sustainability, and career development of technical staff in higher education and research.

WHAT IS THE TECHNICIAN COMMITMENT?

Launched in 2017, it encourages institutions to commit to improving the working conditions and career prospects for technicians, ensuring they are valued and supported in their roles. By signing the commitment, institutions pledge to implement actions that promote the importance of technical staff, fostering a collaborative environment that enhances educational experiences and supports the broader mission of empowering students.

MESSAGE FROM THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

"It's hugely important to recognise and value the work that technicians do here at Birmingham City University. They make an enormous contribution to teaching and learning.

"They are integral to creating safe and creative working areas, enabling students to flourish and advance in their technical abilities in readiness for their professional careers."

Professor David Mba
Vice Chancellor

THE FOUR KEY AREAS OF THE TECHNICIAN COMMITMENT

Sustainability

Ensure the future sustainability of technical skills across the organisation and that technical expertise is fully utilised.

To see how BCU are advancing this theme, and the actions we're taking, see page 5.

Career Development

Enable career progression opportunities for technicians through the provision of clear, documented career pathways.

To see how BCU are advancing this theme, and the actions we're taking, see page 8.

Recognition

Support technicians to gain recognition through professional registration and external awards schemes.

To see how BCU are advancing this theme, and the actions we're taking, see page 11.

Visibility

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

To see how BCU are advancing this theme, and the actions we're taking, see page 13.

OUR ACTION PLAN

Our action plan has been created and developed in partnership with our technical community, who play a crucial role in shaping the response to the Technician Commitment, its implementation and continuation.

To advance the main themes of the Technician Commitment at Birmingham City University, we have established this 24-month action plan.

The actions outlined in this plan have been grouped according to the theme they align with most closely, ensuring a clear and structured approach to addressing key priorities. However, many actions contribute to multiple themes, reflecting their interconnected nature. The icons outlined on the previous page are used alongside each action in the plan to provide a visual guide demonstrating how each action connects across different themes, emphasising their broader impact.

CHAMPIONING TECHNICAL STAFF

"As Institution Lead for the Technician Commitment and Chair of the Steering Group for this initiative, I am privileged to have been involved in the development of the action plan. This process has been an opportunity to collaborate with technicians across the university, ensuring their voices are heard and reflected in our priorities.

"The action plan provides a structured framework to enhance the visibility, recognition, and career development of our technical staff, bringing our commitment to creating a sustainable and supportive environment where their contributions are valued and celebrated to life."

Adam Race
Chief People Officer,
Nominated Institutional Lead
of the Technician Commitment

SUSTAINABILITY

Workforce Planning goal:

Enhance all technical service areas to support effective course delivery.

Why?
Leveraging the technicians' specialisms, time, and experience
will effectively prepare our students for their chosen
professions, ensuring they are well-equipped for success
in their future endeavours.

Actions:

Utilise specialist skills of technicians to grow commercial activity
and ensure technicians are fairly paid for delivering such activity
outside of contracted hours, aligned to academic and professional
services colleagues.

Demonstrate commitment to the Technician Commitment
and career development of technicians at BCU by substantiating
the current Learning and Organisational Development role
to continually develop the Technician Commitment and focus
on supporting CPD for the technical community.

Review job descriptions and roles so they align with the specialist role needed to deliver the required service.

Clarify the difference between teaching and demonstrating. Where teaching is required from a technician as part of the job, ensure this is properly reflected in the job description and recognised in job evaluation.

Explore the benefits of developing and implementing a workload planning approach for technicians that considers turnaround times, prevents overloading, and is appropriate to their specific job roles.

Succession Planning goal:

Develop a comprehensive succession planning framework to grow and sustain a skilled tech workforce.

Why?
Utilising our advanced facilities and adapting to evolving environmental changes, we can sustain the diverse technical skills we offer while fulfilling our responsibility to retaining a skilled workforce within the city of Birmingham.

Actions:

Identify cross-faculty collaboration opportunities on shared areas of interest, equipment and resources. e.g. Health and Safety, training opportunities.

Develop a proposal for filling entry level/work experience positions. Consider Grow Your Own Programme, apprenticeships, degree apprenticeships and hosting T Level students.

Explore the implementation of environmentally sustainable practices for technicians by encouraging resource management, sharing best practices, setting sustainability goals, and monitoring progress in their roles

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Career Framework goal:

Create a career framework for technical workforce.

Why?
Implementing a career framework allows individuals to recognise the range of development opportunities available to them, enabling them to enhance their skills and experiences. This preparation will better equip them for future career prospects and contribute to effective succession planning.

Actions:

Develop a career framework which shows the opportunities available in support of technicians' career aspirations.

Play an active role in the ITSS Career Pathway Action Group along with 21 other institutions creating change and innovating in areas related to career pathways for technicians.

Continuous Professional Development goal:

*Identify and promote CPD activity to all levels
of the technical community.*

Why?
Empowering technicians to take charge of their development fosters
a positive learning culture that ultimately enhances the student
learning experience and improves outcomes.

Actions:

Promote and utilise the apprenticeship levy to develop existing staff.

Role model a proactive learning culture by encouraging and engaging
in appropriate learning activities at all levels.

Increase accessibility to varying qualification levels for technicians
with clear criteria and method of application for HEA Fellowship,
PgCert, Master's and PhD in support of people's career aspirations.

Utilise the mentor platform for technicians' CPD, encouraging
technicians to become a mentor as well as a mentee and develop
an informal mentoring culture among technicians.

Identify, create and promote an annual learning and development plan that is periodically evaluated, measuring impact and outcomes for the technician community.

Facilitate appropriate secondments and job shadowing opportunities to enhance technical colleagues' CPD.

Develop a structure for technicians to gain specialist registrations and accreditations.

Create skill share workshops and seminars for technicians to participate in during quieter points in the year, i.e. summer and following winter break.

RECOGNITION

Technicians' Impact goal:

Showcase the impact of the technician's role on the wider University performance.

Why?
By collecting higher quality data from various feedback sources, we can accurately assess the effectiveness of technical support and pinpoint areas that require enhancement in technical services.

Actions:

Gather feedback internally to demonstrate the specific impact of technicians on the student experience and outcomes.

Review our data to ensure insights into the contribution of technicians are identified and, where appropriate ensuring inclusion in external data sets e.g. HESA.

Explore NSS questions and free text comments to identify where technicians have contributed to the student experience, to provide valuable insights into their impact and guide future improvements.
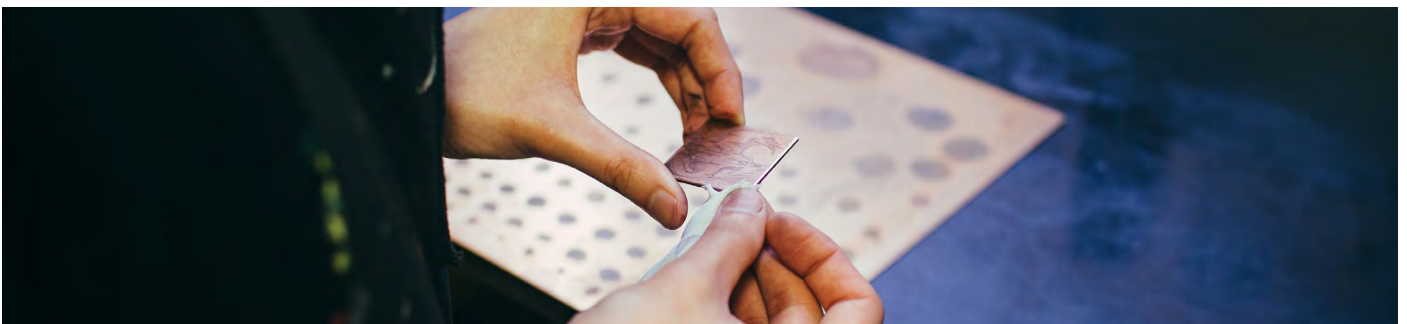
Celebrating Success goal:

Recognise success of teams and individual technicians.

Why?
Recognising technicians and their contributions at a local and national level will build a positive culture within teams and demonstrate a commitment from the University to recognise success of its staff.

Actions:

Commit to establishing and retaining a technician specific category in University award schemes.

Establish a process in which technicians are nominated from the University for annual external award schemes.

VISIBILITY

Internal Visibility goal:

Increase technicians' visibility internally at the University.

Why?
Technical staff offer unique perspectives and innovative problem-solving capabilities. Increasing awareness of the skills and contributions they offer among academics and professional services will enhance the overall student experience.

Actions:

Include technicians in introductions to students at the start of the academic year and in relevant module information where specific technicians support is required to maximise student access to available skills and services.

Review information on existing directory and incorporate additional useful information including skills and specialisms.

Utilise the internal communication newsletter, creating and developing a technician feature sharing profiles, service and skills information and promoting news, updates and events.

Build an internal webpage to share technician news, success stories and other useful information, communicated across the University.

Showcase technicians through a 'Skills in Action' video feature, highlighting their role and expertise.

Invite technicians to be involved in relevant University projects, focus groups, committees and forums.

External Visibility goal:

Increase technicians' visibility externally at the University.

> **Why?**
> Increasing technicians' visibility externally is important because it enhances recognition of their contributions, promotes and inspires collaboration, attracts new talent, and strengthens the institution's reputation.

Actions:

Involve technicians in outreach activities including community projects and schools and college visits.

Build a webpage for the BCU website to publicly share updates and plans on the Technician Commitment, making our action plan publicly available.

Include technicians on the BCU website specific to colleges
and courses, including photo, profiles and 'Skills in Action' videos.

Establish a local technical network between Birmingham universities,
enabling technicians to connect, share knowledge and explore
collaborative training opportunities.

Work with marketing to build asset of photos, profiles and videos
and develop content for course and University advertisement
campaigns. Include technicians in communication for Open Days
and Offer Holder Days.
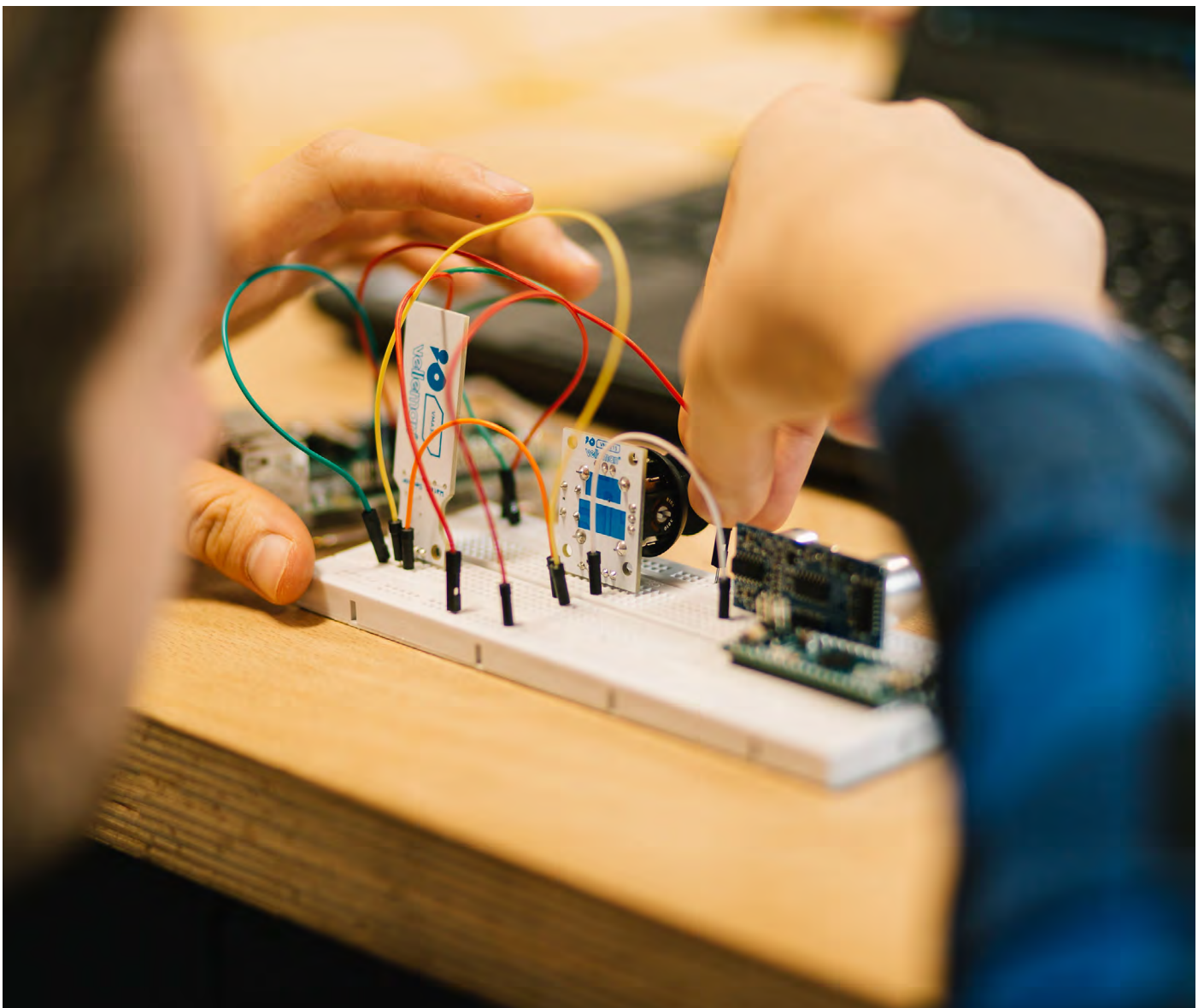
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