

Technicians' Commitment

Stage Two Self-Assessment & Action Plan

Evaluating Impact through Self-Assessment and Future Action Planning

Organisation

King's College London

Institutional Lead

Stephen Franey

Technical Staff Development
Manager, Research Management
& Innovation Directorate

Technician Commitment Signatory

Professor Richard Trembath

Senior Vice President & Provost
(Health)

Technical Staff Network Sponsor

Rachel Parr

Chief Operating Officer (Health)

Overview of our technical staff structures

When King's initially completed staff data for the 'Technicians' Commitment self-assessment review in Stage One, we were unable to accurately identify the number of technicians employed across King's due to the disparate and non-standardised nature of their job titles, locations and role definitions.

We relied on accrued information from data collection surveys and HR data, which we subsequently used in the Stage One submission.

Since then we have taken a detailed look at where our technicians are located, their reporting lines, the functions they perform, professional registration status and the specific roles that they fulfil.

The term 'technical staff' is used to describe one of the most wide-ranging and diverse employee groups within the university. Classified as 'Professional Services' staff, most of them directly support our strategic priorities of delivering world-leading education and research.

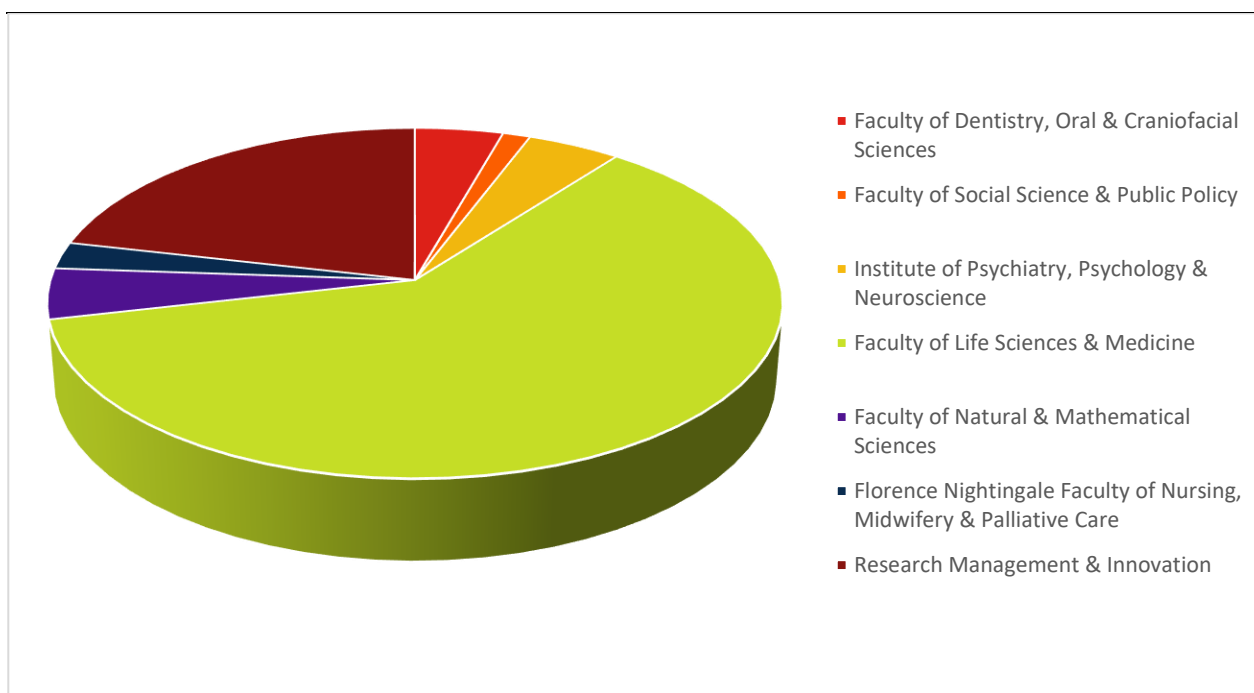
The range of professional expertise across the community is especially wide, covering semi-skilled, skilled, academic and expert level staff. Their roles are funded by both core and research award funding, with roles existing across research, education, specialist facilities, professional services, Directorates, workshops and other specialist areas. The members of technical staff who are included within the remit of the 'Technicians' Commitment are defined as those who are engaged directly in supporting academic related work.

King's currently employs approximately 360 technicians, who work either within one of our nine faculties or a specialist function.

King's HR departments, including Development, Diversity & Cultural Change, are supporting efforts to collect diversity and inclusion data for our technical services community. It is clearly evident that, since initially making our 'Technicians' Commitment in 2017 as a founding signatory, King's has greatly improved the diversity of our technical staff workforce – including on the characteristics of age, gender and ethnicity – therefore broadening our perspectives and collective experiences to more accurately represent our local community in London.

King's technical staff numbers

Faculty or Directorate	Number of technical staff (identified in Oct 2020)
Faculty of Dentistry, Oral & Craniofacial Sciences	16
Faculty of Social Science & Public Policy	5
Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience	17
Faculty of Life Sciences & Medicine	222
Faculty of Natural & Mathematical Sciences	17
Florence Nightingale Faculty of Nursing, Midwifery & Palliative Care (including King's Simulation & Interactive Learning Centres)	9
Research Management & Innovation (including Biological Services)	78 (56 BS)



Institutional approach to the Technician Commitment



The Technician Commitment is a university and research institution initiative, led by a steering group of sector bodies, with support from the Science Council and the Technicians Make It Happen campaign.

The Commitment aims to ensure visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability for technicians working in higher education and research, across all disciplines.

King's College London is proud to be a founding signatory of the Technician Commitment.



“Technicians have been instrumental in delivering our response to COVID-19 this year in managing the delivery of priority research in a safe way.

I am delighted that technical staff have participated in senior-level response teams and had their voices heard as an essential part of decision-making during this time. I look forward to seeing them build their confidence and experiences in these roles that enable increased visibility.”

Rachel Parr, Chief Operating Officer (Health)

Governance

Technicians' Commitment and Principal Leads

Technical Staff Network Sponsor: Chief Operating Officer (Health)

Technical Staff Development Manager: Head of Analytical Platforms



Staff Network Core Group

Head of Technical Services,
FoDOCS

Technical Staff Development
Manager

Technical Managers: Chemistry,
NMS, FoLSM and IoPPN

Head of Anticritical Platforms, RMID

Head of Technical Services, FoLSM
& IoPPN

Technical Manager, Physics, NMS

Head of BSU

Head of Technical Services, SSPP

Head of Centre for Research Staff
Development

Leadership representative from
Development, Diversity & Inclusion

Leadership representative from
Organisation Development

Technical Staff Think Tanks

Campus-based think tanks comprising
grade 1 to 5 technicians reporting into
a focus group and meeting as a
collective group twice a year.

Think tanks are chaired by single
volunteer Campus champions on single
year rotation.

Networks to be established at Guy's,
Denmark Hill, St Thomas', Strand and
Waterloo campuses.



Specialist Network Focus Groups

Sustainability

Health & Safety

Web Development &

Communications

CPD/Workshops

Professional Registration

Equipment Sharing and Exploiting
Our Buying Power

Development, Diversity & Inclusion

Activities

We hold annual University-wide away days, though these have been done online every 3 weeks since lockdown to provide support and foster a sense of community. All the senior leadership team have actively participated. King's also has a growing and very active technical network (King's TechNet), led by a focus group of senior technical and professional staff and a senior sponsor.

King's Technical Staff Network

The Network:

- Provides support to and enables a collaborative community for King's technicians
- Engages in fruitful and honest dialogue with King's Senior Management Team – our ethos has always been to develop initiatives and approaches that are led by technicians themselves, with leadership steer and support
- Offers a mechanism through which we promote career progression and recognition

Successes

- Established mentorship scheme to assist technicians in achieving professional registration.
- Mentorship scheme to assist in professional registration and career development linked into London and Southeast TCI Network, Centre for Research Staff Development Scheme, and King's Professional Services Mentoring Programmes (led by Organisational Development). In this way it gives technical staff the greatest scope to develop in all areas.
- Instrumental in ensuring that technicians were included in the university's interpretation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers
- Fully supported, funded, and active engagement by senior leadership, examples of this are funding year on year for professional registration and the creation of a Technical Development Manager/TCI lead post

In progress

Directory of expertise (in development)

Institutional Action Plan 2017

Below is the very ambitious plan that we submitted three years ago. We are delighted with the number of successes and targets that that have been met. We acknowledge the few shortcomings; these – along with further targets - will be our primary focus in 2021.

VISIBILITY				
Aim	Owner	Tactics	Measures of Success	RAG Rating
Strengthen the Technical Services Network and broaden membership.	Technical Services Network Core Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lunch & Learn sessions • Newsletter articles (departmental, faculty and university-wide) • Direct email campaign • Posters • Annual Technician Away Day 	<p>Increased membership of Network (from six members in 2015, to 200 members in 2017, to 300 members by end of 2018/19 academic year). Membership has expanded to include other research and academic staff because they recognise the value of the Network.</p> <p>Members receive newsletters from the Centre for Research Staff Development, to ensure they are aware of the more wide-ranging training and development opportunities available to them.</p>	

			Oversubscribed Away Day, as are most events and workshops run.	
Expand networking opportunities	Technical Services Network Core Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops • Away Day • Lunch & Learn sessions • Network now welcomes other research staff (PhD students, RAs, PDRAs and Teaching Fellows) 	<p>Increased and repeat attendance at events, and positive feedback received from attendees.</p> <p>Professional Registration Workshops and one to one mentoring are very popular.</p> <p>High rates of translation to PR Workshops to include Human Anatomy, Microscopy, Histology, Lab Sustainability & Biobanking.</p> <p>Since March 2020, a very active constituency of technical staff, many of whom are on furlough leave, rely on the Network for updates and social events.</p>	

Actively promote technician activities	Technical Services Network Core Group. Faculty Technical Leads	Senior leadership events/Fora Newsletter Faculty and university wide newsletters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing engagement with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Science Council ○ TCI (Gatsby) ○ King's Health Partners NHS Foundation Trusts ○ Centre for Research Staff Development ○ Organisational Development • Creation of new post: Technical Development / TCI Lead Manager 	
RECOGNITION				
Increase number of nominations of technical staff for King's Awards	Technical Services Network Core Group and Sponsors	Promote King's Awards throughout Network and support colleagues to write nominations Increase overall number of nominations for technicians	A Teaching Technician won the 2018 King's Award for Sustainability and several others were shortlisted from the pool of nominations. In 2017, a senior technician received the coveted King's Lifetime Achievement Award.	

			Unfortunately, due to the coronavirus pandemic, King's Awards 2020 was postponed.	
Recognise role of technical staff in teaching and research web pages	Technical Services Network Core Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements to Research Portal (PURE) to accurately reflect technical services contributions • Improvements to teaching web pages to accurately reflect technical services contributions 	<p>Visibility and presence remain generally poor for teaching technicians on departmental web pages – working to resolve this</p> <p>Research Schools and Centres tend to represent technical staff more clearly on their web pages and this is set to be enhanced further as part of an ongoing wider web improvement project.</p>	
Celebrate professional registration	Professional Registration Sponsors, Primary Investigators, line managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate presentation • Names on web site • Faculty newsletters • Yearly event hosted by senior management to 	<p>Certificates have been presented to individuals by senior leadership at Away Days and other events.</p> <p>News stories have been published online and in Faculty newsletters.</p>	

		celebrate the success		
Include teaching technical staff in the University's teaching excellence awards	University-wide Teaching Departments	Support with writing nominations and encourage Heads of Teaching Departments to actively nominate technical colleagues	One senior technical officer has been granted Fellowship status of King's Higher Education Academy In the Health Faculties, technical staff have yet to be included in departmental teaching excellence awards	
CAREER DEVELOPMENT				
Continue to actively promote professional registration with the Science Council	KCL Employer champions, PI's and technical leads	Embed into the Performance Development Review (PDR) process and Technician Job Descriptions	Increased take up month on month, with a steady flow of interest and applications. Continued support from senior leadership team, including Faculty leads. Constantly and actively supported by senior leadership Good team of application mentors	

Core competencies framework	HR and technical leads together with individual line managers	Embed (PDR), job descriptions		
New Technical Services career structure to align with national career framework, including generic job descriptions from Apprenticeship level to Head of technical services	HR and technical leads together with individual line managers. It is planned for Senior leadership team, together with senior professional service staff to take ownership and leadership	All staff to complete and link to PDR and training records Person specifications for all grades used in recruitment. Managed moves of staff to different roles	Focus and campus working group established which are cross-faculty and lead by Technical staff with representation from other professional networks Hoping to address through the Career Mapping & Progression workstream of the recently established Research Culture Change Management led by Vice Dean of Research for Natural & Mathematical Sciences technical representation on each of the groups	
Work with the Centre for Research Staff Development (CRSD)	Technical representatives and the Leadership of the CRSD	Network meetings with all research staff who are categorised in this group (post Docs, research assistants / technicians and teaching fellows)	Active engagement in local and national events Running workshops and actively engaging with the CRSD Technical development Manager works one day a week with the CRSD to work	

		Sharing best practice	on ensuring the technical team are included and share best practice Inclusion of Technicians in King's interpretation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers	
Engage in the development and delivery of research enhanced education	Education Strategy Delivery Group and Vice Deans of Education	Closer alignment of Academic and technical staff. Technical voice/input at the Centre of Education meetings	This has the support of the Head of the Centre for Education	
SUSTAINABILITY				
Apprenticeship scheme	Individual faculties and directorates	Ensure a smooth running of recruitment training plan to ensure the University and society in general has a motivated, skilled and professional through-	We currently have 2 apprentices carrying on from Level 3 to L 5 higher apprenticeship	

		put of skilled and professional technical trainees	Commitment to establishing rebooted, centralised technician apprenticeship scheme through RMID	
Deploy resources more strategically and proactively manage risks	Faculty management senior technical staff	Review of job descriptions Review training needs Identify areas or skill shortage Replace the institutional knowledge	Smooth running of the university teaching and research gaining new technical skills and working in a different work environment Working group for this is being established who will look producing a working document	
Expand professional network to include colleagues from across our major NHS partner Trusts (Guy's and St Thomas', King's College	Technical Services Network Core Group	Promotion across King's Health Partners Joint initiatives and events Closer collaboration in outreach activates	Extended membership of network to include colleagues from across King's Health Partners Engagement in clinical projects across sites	

Hospital and South London and Maudsley)		Opportunities to learn specialist clinical teaching and research methods	There have already been 4 half day meetings/ Courses on bio banking, microscopic techniques, tissue culture. There has been a good proportion from Trust areas in attendance.	
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Additional activities aligned to our Technicians' Commitment not covered in our original action plan

- Teaching Fellowships, following on from specialist Anatomy teaching Technician being awarded this prestigious award. The King's Network is keen to encourage other to follow this example
- Stronger voice at a higher level, we now have representation on many high-level network and committees
- Appointment of Technical Development /TCI Manager
- Strong and influential TCI core focus group, this meets every three weeks with excellent attendance
- Technicians included in King's interpretation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers
- Technician membership of the Research Staff Representative Committee – feeds into university-wide influencing and policy-making processes
- Number of Professional registrations raising this has accelerated since lock down with 40 extra registrants or candidate close to submitting

King's Action Plan: 2020 to 2023

YEAR 1

- The primary objective will be to work on the Amber and Red issues in the previous action plan which were very ambitious in the first place. It is essential these are dealt with as a priority. At the current time of uncertainty with CV 19
- Strengthen Campus network groups and the Specialist Focus groups with regular catch ups with members of the focus group
- Mentoring (working with the Centre for Research Staff Development who provide the mentor/Mentee training and matching/compatibility transitions)
- Technicians to contribute to Research Culture initiatives pertaining to research staff, prioritising reward & recognition, career mapping & progression and bullying & harassment. Projects led by the Centre for Research Staff Development and a central Research Culture Task & Finish Group. See accompanying doc for an overview of these projects

YEAR ON YEAR

- More interfaculty and cross university working and collaboration.
- Recommendations to improve PDR for the coming year were made to SMT in Dec 2019 included greater effort required to expand the quantity and quality of PDRs, which was supported by SMT. PDR training has continued, including adapting to an online alternative to ensure ongoing access to learning resources during the Covid-19 pandemic. A PDR review in Autumn 2020 will ensure ongoing development

Career pathways

- Explore the logistics of creating centralised units in order to deliver small facilities of specialist technical expertise through financially sustainable means. These specialist facilities would be intended to provide high quality local services, but be accessible to researchers across the University, and run and managed by technical managers and specialist technicians.

- As a pilot we could perhaps consider including microscopy, histology, tissue culture, biobanking and cold storage management. The advantage of this are several-fold: providing expert technical support to our research community, creates career progression opportunities for technicians and more financially sustainable. This would give much more visibility, structure and career development, as well as enhancing the job satisfaction, as well as providing an expert service to the university as a whole
- As part of the Career Mapping & Progression project (above) explore the boundaries between technical and other roles in the research environment and the potential for varied career paths
- Raising the profile and importance of the TCI with HR so that they are collecting this data for us. Not having to retrospectively collect it and risk missing people off – this process has been initiated.

Environmental Sustainability

- Empower our technicians to initiate, maintain and monitor operational sustainability initiatives in alignment with King's stated target of net-zero carbon emissions by 2025 (<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/zero-carbon-by-2025>). King's Technicians are uniquely positioned to support and drive King's laboratories towards efficient lab operations, in part through the implementation of initiatives and standards such as LEAF, which the college has committed to implementing in 100% of laboratories. Such initiatives will be supported by the Technical Network specialist focus group on environmental sustainability, which in turn will feed any proposed initiatives into the KCL Sustainable Science Committee for approval.
- In recognition that student bodies are actively seeking sustainability credentials within education - Integration of sustainability content and operational improvements within undergraduate programmes, postgraduate programmes, and modules. To be delivered by technical staff, with approval from relevant academic staff. Integration of sustainability criteria within teaching content and operations will serve to both improve career visibility, as well as upskill those involved. This in turn improves professional development opportunities as sustainability becomes further integrated within the professional research sector.

- Integration of environmental sustainability into technicians' job descriptions and the PDR process, in line with the objectives of the Sustainable Science Committee, such as uptake of sustainability standards in all laboratories.

Diversity, Development and Cultural Change

Visibility: we aim to improve communication with and engagement of technical staff on DDI matters, to ensure that they are fully involved and have an impact on decisions taken at senior executive level within the Institution. This ensures suggestions from a diverse pool of technical staff representatives are taken into consideration. Actions planned to this effect are:

- Include DDI information at induction specific for Academic/ Research/ Technical and Professional Services roles
- Improve King's internal and external DDI webpages at all organisational levels
- Encourage technical staff to create personal profile pages
- Create a DDI Focus Group within the Technical Network
- Create a network of technical staff representatives sitting on DDI Committees across organisational levels and Faculties

Career Development: we aim to define a clear career pathway for technical staff within the Institution, taking into consideration professional experience and additional roles and certifications above and beyond their job descriptions. Actions planned to this effect are:

- Clarify promotion routes and promote internal and external career opportunities via sponsors and mentors
- Proposal for Embedding Career Development for Grant funded Technicians
- Promote professional registration and mentoring
- Revise PDR forms to be more specific for technical staff
- Ensure Academic line managers are aware of all of the above

Recognition: we aim to build an environment where technical staff are valued and feel recognised for their contribution to the Institution research and education by

promoting an inclusive culture and prioritising staff wellbeing. Actions planned to this effect are:

- Collect feedback from technical staff via surveys and the Tech Net DDI Focus Group on wellbeing initiatives, what can be improved etc.
- Encourage applications to internal and external prizes and awards specific for technical staff
- Feature technical staff highlights on DDI pages, newsletters etc.
- Ensure Academic line managers recognise technical staff contributions by adding them as co-authors to publications and generally make them feel part of the team
- King's has Technical representation on the Research Culture Change Management programme led by CRSD and College Research Committee the 3 working groups being, Reward & Recognition, Career Mapping & Progression, and Bullying & Harassment.

Apprenticeship scheme

We plan to start a new centrally-funded technical apprenticeship scheme, The previous one was funded by one faculty from 2017-2020 and had proved worthwhile and productive as illustrated by the fact that 4 apprentices will have been retained by the College following successful completion of their apprenticeships. Difficulty of supporting the scheme at a Faculty level has prevented it continuing, losing the College the opportunity of beginning to refresh its technical workforce with young people keen to find a fulfilling and worthwhile career pathway.

This piecemeal approach to apprenticeship scheme has hindered what is clearly a valuable recruitment stream to mitigate the loss of experienced technicians leaving at the end of their careers. To sustain the schemes momentum, it would benefit from being overseen and funded centrally within the College. This will allow for a resilient level of continuity with technical apprenticeships, giving opportunities for young people to begin their careers as technicians, and for the College to retain the best for its workforce where a need is identified for technical support.

A well supported apprenticeship will produce technicians who have broad multidisciplinary experience, highly motivated to progress their career and grounded in the King's ethos and ways of working.

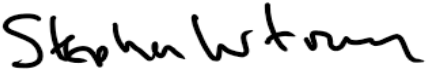
Centrally funded apprentices could either be allocated by competition/application within Schools/Faculties, experiencing a mixture of supporting teaching and research activities or to Core Facilities to support their operations. Wherever they are placed will be expected to provide strong support including mentors, peer support, academic supervisor and a suitable project where required by qualification apprentice is working towards.

Partnership with our NHS trusts (Guy, St Thomas's, Kings College Hospital and South London and Maudsley) King's Health Partners (KHP) Academic Health Sciences Centre and associated NIHR Biomedical Research Centres

This brings together three world-leading NHS Foundation Trusts with our university to carry out health research, education and clinical care. Together, we have nearly 4.8 million patient contacts each year, 40,000 staff, over 30,000 students, and a combined annual turnover of more than £3.7 billion.

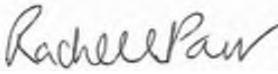
It is our ambition to work as part of KHP to identify all technical staff in our partner NHS Foundation Trusts and offer them the same opportunities as their university colleagues. For example, this would include access to our training workshops, professional registration mentoring, King's TechNet events and social and networking activities.

We, the undersigned, confirm that our Technician Commitment status and three-year action plan is published on our organisation's website at <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/support/facilities/technician-commitment>

Signed 

Stephen Franey, Technician Commitment Nominated Institutional Lead

Date: 26 November 2020

Signed 

Rachel Parr, Technician Commitment Nominated Sponsor

Date: 15 December 2020

Signed 

Professor Richard Trembath, Technician Commitment Signatory – Leader of Institution

Date: 17th December 2020