

2nd August 2021

FAO: Michelle Nettleton
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Re: Technician Commitment – Self-Assessment & Action Plan

Dear Michelle,

We are delighted to write to signatories of the Technician Commitment following the recent stage two Self-Assessment and Action Plan submissions. Reviews were undertaken by a trained peer review panel, consisting of representatives from the Technician Commitment signatory community. All submissions received have now been assessed and the panellists are delighted to see the positive engagement and evidence of impact of the initiative.

Please find below the feedback from the reviewers of the University of Leeds submission.

1. Institution's approach to the Technician Commitment since becoming a signatory:

Since becoming signatories, Leeds have made impressive progress showing clear steps forward for their technical community and have articulated the benefits to their staff well.

The provision of a dedicated budget from each faculty was very positive and has already being shown to be put to good use, e.g. HeaTED membership and the panel were very pleased to see that each Technical Champion would be given protected time of one day per month. This is excellent practice. The representation of technicians on committees throughout Leeds demonstrates a commitment to diversity of opinion and the project to review which committees are attended will be very useful.

The establishment of the TCSG and TCWG shows a commitment to the governance and oversight of the project and demonstrates buy in from senior members of staff. This buy in was also evident in the inclusion of the technician voice in the REF submission and 2020-2030 Strategy. Leeds may wish to internally reflect that to further demonstrate a commitment to the project, they may consider

naming one of the Technician Champions as their Institute Lead (Action A3). This is in acknowledgment of the important advocacy and networking role that position requires.

2. Red, Amber, Green (RAG) Analysis:

The RAG analysis was extremely well presented and the panel enjoyed reading this. Both the traffic light system and the achievements sections of Appendix D made it clear what had been achieved and where the next steps were. Leeds have already achieved a lot and were honest about the challenges in achieving some objectives. It was discussed that actions CD7/CD5 might have progressed further due to reduced 'hands on' work during 2020, however, we considered that the requirement for consultation with multiple stakeholders may have been the reason this was in fact delayed.

3. Evidence of how the action plan is having impact:

Many of the examples, such as promotion of award schemes, HeaTED membership, Professional Registration, apprenticeships, dedicated budget, funded time commitments for the Technician Champion and the Teams Site are undoubtedly the result of a groundswell of engagement with the Technician Commitment and the technical community which is great to see. However, we would suggest that to truly show this is making an impact more robust data should be collected and presented to evidence the impact. The "Management Information Data Reports" are a good example of how to do this. The impression we have from reading this document is that the very positive work at Leeds is the result of bottom-up enthusiasm for it and the challenge now is to use this enthusiasm and engagement to drive forward all the exciting initiatives.

The increase in the number of apprentices and the plans to further increase this was highlighted as being commendable. We also considered that promoting technician careers to students was a really excellent idea, one we had not seen elsewhere, and thoroughly congratulate you on that superb initiative.

4. Additional initiatives/programmes/activities aligned to the Institutions Technician Commitment that is not covered in the original action plan:

The provision of a dedicated budget is important and appears to have enabled progress, and the evidence that HEaTED membership was renewed, following engagement with the community, shows that the technician voice is solicited and heard. We were also impressed by the active participation of technicians in that training. The development of internal networks, especially the Teams site, has been shown to work well, especially throughout 2020. We especially liked the mixture of formal and

informal channels, which served to share useful information but also build relationships between colleagues.

The development of clear terms of reference for the TCSG and TCWG provided a mechanism to feed into UEG, which must be very satisfying for staff working at junior grades to know their voice is heard at the highest level within the university. The other areas we considered worthy of merit include: the video and TechExchange events.

5. 36-month action plan:

Overall, we found the action plan to have SMART objectives and the documents provided were well laid out and contained lots of useful detail. We liked the idea of the Action Plan being a working document, which can develop in response to the changing environment and commend the quarterly review of the Plan by the TCSG. There were many actions that we could highlight as exemplars but just to choose a couple:

- *Action R8/CD2: An excellent way to recognise technicians who teach, and mentoring them through HEA fellowship is good for career progression: four per year is an ambitious goal. The Department of learning and teaching could work alongside technicians to write a guidance manual giving technical examples coinciding with the HEA criteria.*
- *Action CD4: Shadowing and training is an excellent idea to give breadth to technician skills and assist in potential career progression. To increase the impact maybe Leeds could look to team up with other regional institutions?*

Leeds may wish to internally reflect on whether each action should have a dedicated action owner at the implementation level rather than just an oversight group, to avoid actions being overlooked. Additionally, a small number of the actions could do with tighter definition and it may be more fruitful to engage with UKRI and other national bodies on a regional basis.

In summary, we were impressed both by the quality of the submission and the work that is happening at Leeds. This was an enjoyable document to read and we commend the work that went into preparing it.

Congratulations on your positive progress. We look forward to continuing to work with you throughout the implementation of your Action Plan and to supporting the on-going development of technicians at University of Leeds to further increase visibility, recognition, opportunity and sustainability of this vital community.

Yours sincerely,

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