



The James Hutton Institute

Technician commitment



The James
Hutton
Institute

INTRODUCTION

The Technician Commitment is a university and research institute initiative, led by a steering board of sector bodies and hosted by the UK Institute of Technical Skills and Strategy.

The commitment includes four key areas:

Visibility - Ensure all technicians within the organisation are identifiable and the contribution of technicians is visible within and beyond the organisation.

Recognition - Technicians to gain recognition through professional registration and external award schemes.

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

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

“The James Hutton Institute recognises the critical role our technicians and research support play in delivering high-quality research. They represent one of the defining attributes of an independent, research-intensive organisation and I am proud we are signatories of the Technicians Commitment. On behalf of the senior management team, I confirm our intent to deliver on all four of the Pillars of the Commitment ensuring that our technicians are better recognised, supported, valued, and given enhanced opportunities for progression.”

- **Professor Deb Roberts, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Science**

James Hutton Institute Technical Profile

We are a world-leading independent scientific research organization based in Scotland but working in collaboration with researchers across the globe.

Our pioneering science innovates and find solutions for the challenges posed by the climate and nature crises on the sustainability and resilience of our crops, land, natural resources, and communities through the development of transformative tools, interventions, products, and land management practices.

Our research is unique in that it spans diverse topics from studies of individual molecules in cells, to genetics and landscape scale studies on our farms. It combines the natural and socio-economic sciences and considers the connections between crops, resources, and people.

Our vision

To be international leaders in science on land, crops, natural resources, and the wider natural environment, working with communities to provide transformative solutions to global challenges in a way that supports the wellbeing of future generations.

Our mission

To conduct excellent science and engage in new ways of working across disciplines, with business, policy and society, that guide contemporary thought and challenge conventional wisdom, ensure trust and deliver the best outcomes for all

Our objective

To deliver greater food and environmental security through science connecting land and people

Please tell us how your organisation defines its technicians.

A technician at the James Hutton Institute is someone who may assist with scientific and technical support in research and development projects. This role can include a wide range of responsibilities, depending on the specific department or area of study. We try to be as inclusive as possible to recognise the different type of research support roles we have across the Institute. Whilst these roles are mainly lower salary bands, we also have people in technical roles at higher salary bands (Figure 1). We have technicians in many areas across the Institute including for example, Software Engineers, Laboratory Technicians and Social Science Research Assistants.

How many technicians are there in your organisation? Please provide some information on where they are based and/or how they are structured in terms of subject/discipline/department.

There are 129 technical staff in the James Hutton Institute located between our 2 sites in Invergowrie (Dundee) and Craigiebuckler (Aberdeen) (Figure 2) and distributed across all of our science departments (Figure 3):

- ICS – Information and Computational Sciences
- ES – Ecological Sciences
- CMS – Cell and Molecular Sciences
- EBS – Environmental and Biochemical Sciences
- SEGS – Social and Economic Sciences

JHL - James Hutton Institute Scientific Services (James Hutton Institute Scientific Services is a trading name of James Hutton Limited which is the commercial subsidiary of the James Hutton Institute and it's role is to promote and sell the capabilities of the Institute to industry, make a reasonable profit from doing this and ensure that these profits are directed back to the James Hutton Institute to ultimately fund more world-leading research)

Figure 1:

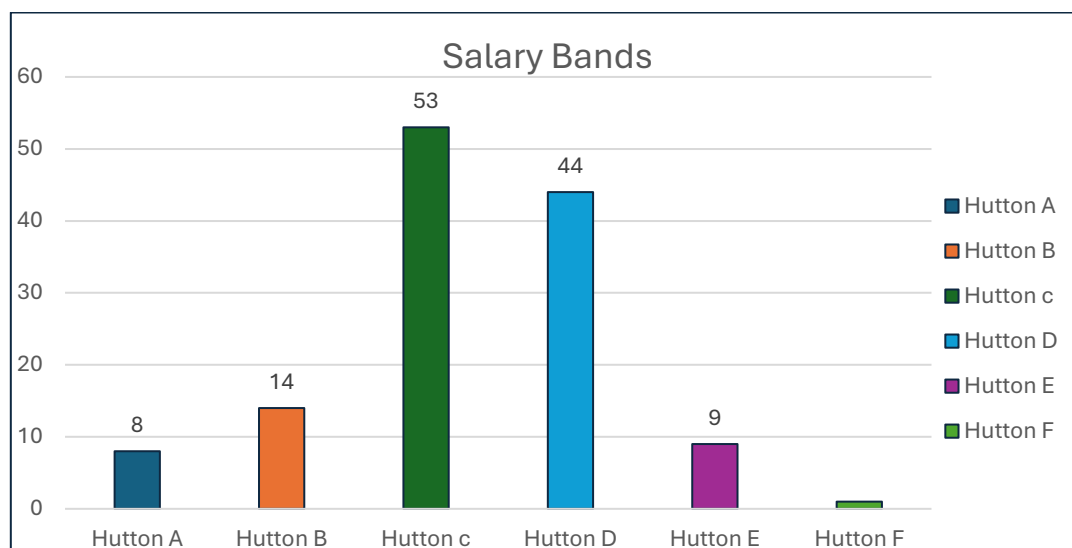


Figure 2:

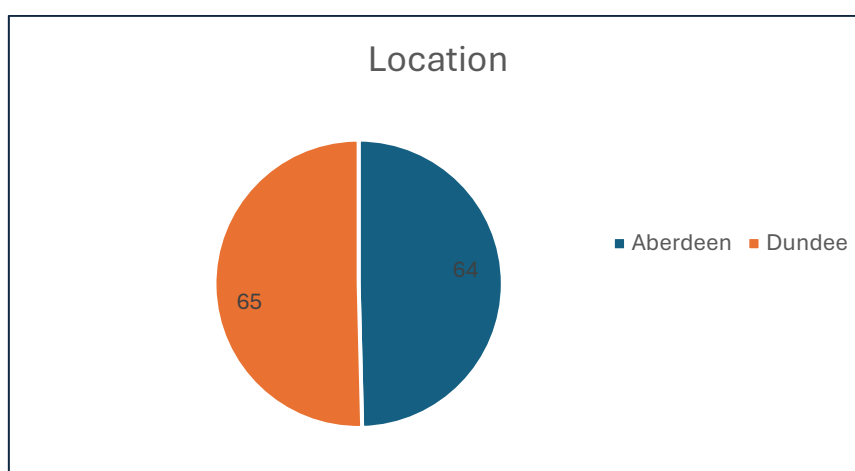
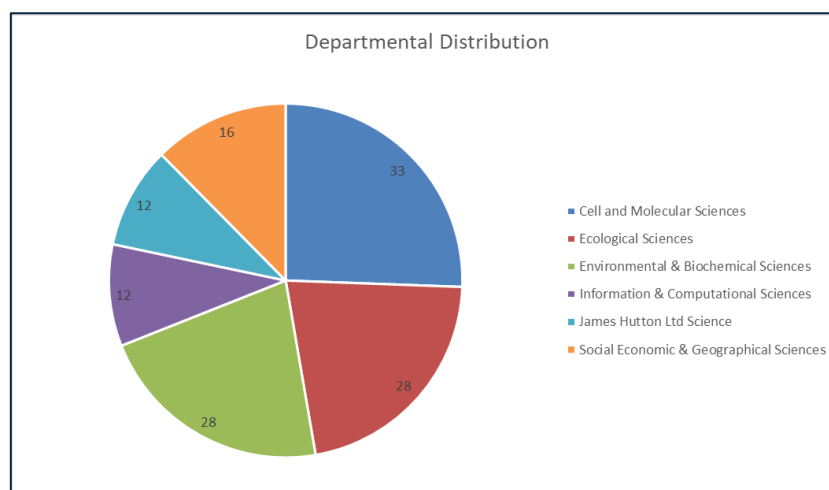


Figure 3:



Please provide details of initiatives/programmes/activities that were already in place for the technical community within your organisation prior to becoming a signatory of the Technician Commitment

An internal committee was created prior to becoming a signatory of the Technician Commitment, the focus of which was to understand current issues and promote career development of our technicians.

The Technician Commitment aims to ensure visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability for technical staff across higher education and research. Please tell us of any initiatives your organisation has put in place to address these themes since becoming a signatory of the Technician Commitment

Since becoming a signatory, we have commenced adding profiles of our technicians to our external website. At our annual Hutton symposium, we report on the actions towards the Technician Commitment. We have also partaken in a joint Technician Commitment event with the University of Dundee and University of St Andrews in 2023 and 2024. As part of the 2024 event, a workshop was held on the perceived career barriers for technicians.

In our 2023 Staff Engagement Survey, we introduced a question on the Technician's commitment to benchmark understanding of the commitment and relevance in different parts of the institute. In addition, we extended the number of technicians in our updated "Hutton Woman of Science" publication as well as running a "Picture a technician" competition and published winners on social media.

A blog was published on support given to PHD students by technicians and there was specific career review meeting guidance developed for technicians as well monitoring the uptake of career reviews by technicians.

As part of our seedcorn funding, we updated the guidance to include applications from technical staff (without a PHD). Finally, the terms of reference for the five yearly external science department reviews have been extended to consider technician colleagues and the extent to which they are aligning with the goals of the Technician Commitment. Any actions arising from this review were embedded into departmental action plans.

Please provide a 24-month action plan detailing future plans to ensure your institution addresses the themes of the Technician Commitment and details of how impact will be evidenced.


Please see appendix 1.


Please evidence how the 'technician voice' was present in the development and formation of the institutional action plan

Whilst devising the action plan, we engaged the opinions of representative technicians to gauge their feedback and to get input on what they thought should be planned actions as well as who should be responsible.

Please confirm that your Technician Commitment status and action plan is published on your organisation's website and provide the relevant URL below

<https://www.hutton.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Technicians-commitment-2025.pdf>

Signed:  (Technician Commitment Nominated Institutional Lead)
Date: 31/01/2025

Signed:  (Technician Commitment Signatory – Leader of Institution)
Date: 31/01/2025

APPENDIX 1:

Action	Objective	Actions Already Taken	Planned Actions (date range)	Responsibility	Success Measures and Timeline
Visibility - Ensure all Technicians in organisation are identifiable and that their contribution is visible within and beyond the institution					
1.	Contribution of all technicians within the institute is visible internally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal committee has met regularly since 2021 to discuss issues relating to technician's commitment Inclusion in Hutton Research Symposium from 2021 Introduced question to 2023 Staff Engagement Survey on Technician's Commitment to benchmark 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a formal working group for technicians in the institute to discuss visibility, recognition and career development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Andy Kindness, Alison Lees, Lisa Dalgarno. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal technician committee exists (March 2025), and series of meetings established (April 2025).
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure representation from IMT and technicians on working group from across all areas of the Institute. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HoDs, Technicians. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All groups fully represented (April 2025).
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add standing item of a report from working group twice a year Equality, Diversity and Inclusion agenda. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Andy Kindness, Alison Lees, Louisa Hamilton. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standing item and report June and January IMT (annually).
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure technician representation on Hutton Employee Forum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lisa Dalgarno 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technicians represented on Forum (March 2025).

		understanding and relevance in different parts of the Institute			
2.	Contribution of technicians is visible externally	Some technician profiles are already available externally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage technicians to have profiles/descriptions of their work on external website and facilitate this. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comms, HoDs, technicians. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decide format and submit information (Sep 2025).
		Extended number of technicians in our updated “Hutton Women in Science” publication (Add link)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop external communications strategy for the technical group and implement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comms, technicians. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report strategy to Jan IMT (Jan 2026) and implement (June 2026).
		Ran “Picture a technician” competition and published winners on our social media.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage technicians to have profiles on LinkedIn. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comms, technicians. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of technicians with LinkedIn profiles.
3.	Improved communication channels between technicians across institute	Established a technicians Webex Chat group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-advertise and promote technicians Webex Chat group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jason Owen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group established and active Mar (2025).
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technicians Commitment event annually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technician’s Commitment working group supported by 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annually.

				Director of Science.	
			<ul style="list-style-type: none">Active encouragement of contribution at Hutton Symposium	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Science Challenge Leads, Technicians working group, IMT.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Contribution of technicians to programme (Yearly, usually Nov.
Recognition – Support Technicians to gain recognition					
1.	Celebrate contributions of technicians to Hutton work	Published blog on support given to PhD students by Technicians	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Celebrate achievements of technical staff in Hutton newsletter, Connect and Open House.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Comms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ensure technician contributions to internal comms (ongoing).
			<ul style="list-style-type: none">Recognise Technician Achievements at Departmental Meetings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">HoDs, technicians.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ensure technician contributions to Departmental updates including verbal updates (ongoing).
			<ul style="list-style-type: none">Report on actions towards technician commitment at Hutton Symposium.		
2.	Ensure appropriate recognition of		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Include technicians as authors or in acknowledgements of	<ul style="list-style-type: none">All staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">More consistent inclusion in publications across groups and disciplines (ongoing).

	technician's contributions in published work		published work as appropriate.		
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create internal online dialogue relating to contributions of technicians in published work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comms and technicians working group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarity around inclusion of technician contribution in published work (January 2026)
Career Development – Enable Career Progression opportunities					
1.	Establish Technician's Career Pathway	<p>Developed specific career review meeting guidance for technicians.</p> <p>Monitored uptake of career review meetings for technical staff.</p> <p>Updated guidance for Seedcorn funding to include applications from technical staff (without a PhD).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all technical roles have clearly identifiable generic job descriptions and job titles as per the Technical Career Pathway. Review and update promotion criteria in line with career pathways. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HR, Technicians Working Group, IMT. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career Pathway described (June 2026) as part of reward project. New job families identified. April 2025. Introduce revised PPDR process with progression, April 2025. Revise promotion criteria Spring 2026
2.	Collaborate with other research institutes to	Joint technician commitment events with University of Dundee and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate possibility of cross institutional mentoring for technical and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technicians Working Group, HR. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possibilities around mentoring explored (June 2026).

	maximise career development opportunities.	University of St Andrews (2023 and 2024).	professional services staff.		
3.	Understand requirements for career progression and awareness of promotion opportunities and JEGS processes	Introduced HR-led promotion workshops from 2021. Survey on barriers to career progression (2022). Survey on training needs (2024). Workshop on perceived career barriers at Technician Commitment event 2024.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Continue to hold promotion workshops each year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">HR	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Promotion workshops attended (annually).
			<ul style="list-style-type: none">Improved guidelines for JEGS applications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">HR	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Improved guidelines/system exists (June 2025).
			<ul style="list-style-type: none">Address barriers to progression.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">HR, IMT, technicians working group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Understand and react to barriers to progression (ongoing).
			<ul style="list-style-type: none">Promote CPD opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">HR, line managers, IMT.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Training opportunities, funding and recording are clear (ongoing).
Sustainability – Ensure the future sustainability of technical skills across the organisation and the technical expertise is fully utilised					
1.	Ensure sustainability of	Terms of Reference of 5 yearly external	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Share expertise within specialised technical groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Technicians working group	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Communication between technicians and dept staff (ongoing)

	technical skills and career resilience	science department reviews extended to consider technician colleagues and the extent to which we are aligning with the goals of the Commitment. Actions arising from this embedded into Departmental action plans			
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage sharing of skills between departments to grow technician's experience and share expertise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HoDs, technicians working group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication between technicians and HoDs (ongoing)
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate opportunities for skills sharing/training/visits between other organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technicians working group, HR, HoDs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training details visible and understood (ongoing)
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure availability of FTMA funding for training and placement opportunities is widely publicised 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technicians working group, HR, HoDs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased communication between Technicians from other organisations.