

Technician Commitment

Evaluating Impact through Self-Assessment & Future Action Planning

Organisation: Babraham Institute

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Table of Contents

To provide some context, please provide a brief profile of your organisation (up to 250 words):	2
Please tell us how your organisation defines its technicians:	3
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):	5
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:	6
Please tell us of any initiatives your organisation has put in place to address these themes since becoming a signatory of the Technician Commitment:	13
Please provide a 24-month action plan, detailing future plans to ensure your organisations addresses the themes of the Technician Commitment and details of how impact will be evidenced:.....	17
Please evidence how the 'technician voice' was present in the development and formation of the institutional action plan:.....	18
Please confirm that your Technician Commitment status and action plan is published on your organisation's website and provide the relevant URL here:	19

Glossary

BEC	Babraham Executive Committee
BI-4S	Senior Scientific & Support Staff Committee
BSU	Biological Support Unit
e4s	equality4success
EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
KEC	Knowledge Exchange and Commercialisation
RITG	Research Institutes Technician Commitment Group
TC	Technician Commitment
TCIL	Technician Commitment Institute Lead
TCSG	Technician Commitment Steering Group

To provide some context, please provide a brief profile of your organisation (up to 250 words):

The Babraham Institute is a world-class research institution, situated at the heart of the Babraham Research Campus, near Cambridge. Our mission is to be an international leader in research focusing on basic cell and molecular biology with an emphasis on healthy ageing through the human lifecycle.

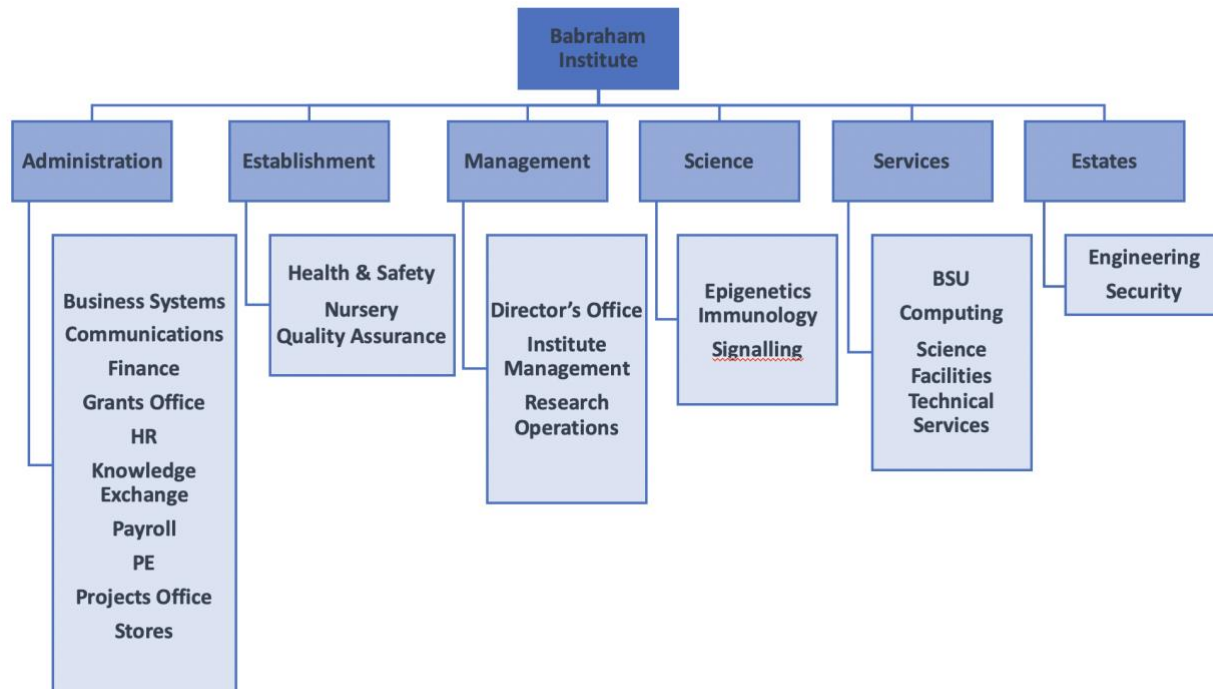
Research at the Babraham Institute addresses fundamental biological questions of how cells and organisms develop and respond to the environment. A particular focus is how we age and studying the underlying mechanisms controlling this process, for example how older people respond differently to infection compared to younger people.

To answer these questions we examine the regulation of gene expression, the control of cell function by signalling processes and changes in organ systems including the nervous system. We utilise model systems: yeast, worms and mice as well as studying human cohorts.

Our research is split into three programmes: Epigenetics, Signalling, and Immunology, supported by strategic programme grants from the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and additional funding from research councils, the EU and charities. Whilst our PhD students are registered with, and obtain their final qualification from, the University of Cambridge, we have no affiliation with a higher education institute.

There are approximately 400 Individuals working at Babraham, defined as: Employees, Babraham Institute registered PhD students, Research Fellows (honorary), Honorary Members of Faculty, visiting students, visiting researchers and workers; November 2020. Around 1/3 of these are researchers, with the remaining workforce supporting the delivery of the science, based in diverse functional areas as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Organisation of the Babraham Institute



Please tell us how your organisation defines its technicians:

The Cohort

Staff who provide the core technical excellence underpinning Babraham's research are considered part of the technical community. Technicians are skilled and knowledgeable in their subject areas and provide practical, hands-on support to our researchers. Their specialist skills, experience and ability to develop and implement methodologies enable our researchers to deliver world class science.

The community includes staff working in the following areas:

Science Facilities – centralised shared core facilities

Biological Support Unit - provides housing and care for pathogen-free rodents

Health and Safety & Quality Assurance- oversees health, safety and quality assurance of research, including biosafety, radiation protection, chemical control, fire prevention and electrical and mechanical safety.

Technical Services – provide operational support for the researchers including the upkeep and maintenance of shared laboratories, technical equipment, the provision, cleaning and sterilisation of glassware and other lab materials

Computing - provides IT services to the Institute as well, in addition to campus-related IT services

Stores - provides on-site laboratory consumables and small equipment, in addition to managing external purchasing of Institute-owned and consignment stock.

Lab-based Research Assistants and Technicians – undertake research projects within and provide support to research groups.

Inclusion in the cohort

After becoming signatories in December 2019, the Technician Commitment Institute Lead (TCIL) presented the initiative at an Institute-wide townhall event. The purpose was to raise the visibility of the initiative and enable staff to self-identify as a 'technician'. A more focused presentation took place in January 2020 to provide further details and answer questions. Following these meetings, the final cohort was agreed upon and staff were asked to nominate themselves for inclusion on the Steering Group (TCSG) to represent their peers.

We received numerous expressions of interest from across the Institute to join the initiative which, after deliberation, were thought to be outside the remit. It was considered that trying to accommodate too many areas would limit the impact for everyone. The 'thought experiment' undertaken was that the community should include those people who were critical for research to be undertaken, ie. without whom it would be very difficult to conduct experiments on a specific, given day.

Another rationale for inclusion of these teams was that, unlike postdoctoral researchers and students, there is no formal forum for these departments. This has been previously highlighted through consultations run by the equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) team at the Institute. Furthermore, those consultations also highlighted dissatisfaction with the career advice and progression at Babraham for support staff and many staff indicated they felt undervalued by academic staff and senior management and considered their contributions to be taken for granted and / or that their knowledge and experience was not given equal weight to that of their researcher colleagues.

The Technician Commitment initiative is an opportunity to address these concerns and provide a voice for the community.

Terms of Reference for the TSCG were prepared by the TCIL in advance of the first committee meeting and were ratified during the first meeting. The functions of the group are to:

- Define who are considered 'technicians' at the Babraham Institute and develop representative and inclusive language to define this cohort
- Engage and consult with relevant stakeholders from across the Institute to provide a representative approach to the Technician Commitment
- Identify the key areas requiring action within the Institute and develop a 24-month Action Plan to embed the principles of the Technician Commitment within BI
- Oversee implementation of the Action Plan
- Raise the visibility of the community by championing their activities, including identifying opportunities to promote the Commitment within and outside the Institute
- Identify emerging areas which require attention and action by the Institute.

Where necessary, working groups will be assembled to focus on discrete areas of activity, comprising members from within and outside the main Group. The Chair of these working groups will be a member of the Technician Commitment Steering Group.

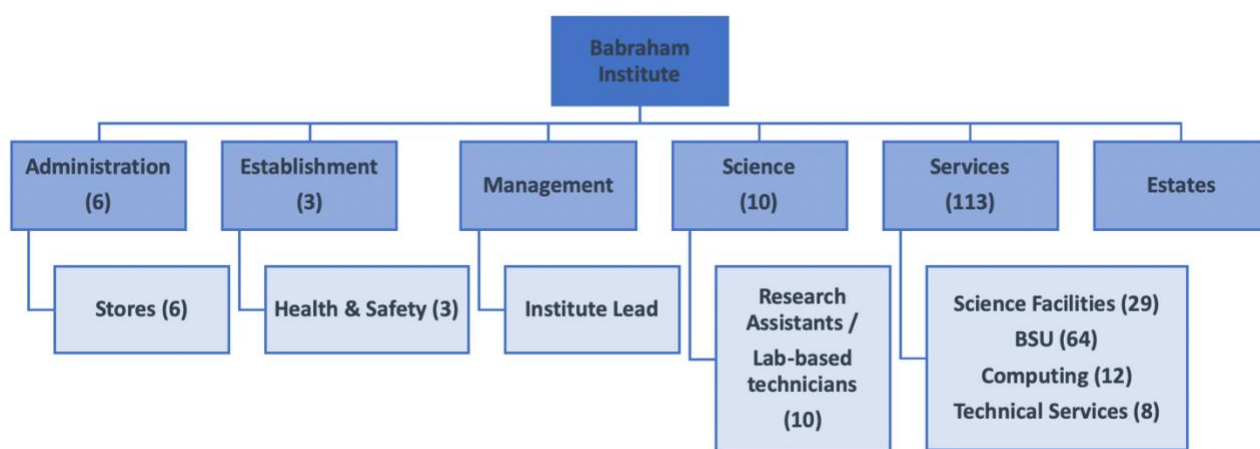
The first priority was to propose a collective noun for the members of the cohort that would satisfy the majority of the cohort. The TCSG the committee discussed the terminology around 'technician' and why this was particularly appropriate to colleagues from one area, but not others. Numerous suggestions were put forward and the TCSG members were asked to discuss this with their cohort and report back. The term 'Technical Specialist' was agreed to be a good compromise and will be used throughout to refer to the cohort of staff covered by the Technician Commitment.

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):

As of November 2020, there were 132 Individuals classed as Technical Specialists at the Babraham Institute. This represents 32% of the total Institute headcount.

Research at Babraham is structured around the three Institute Strategic Programmes focusing on scientific areas. There are numerous ways of displaying the organisational structure; Figure 2 splits individuals across the six functional areas. This split shows the spread of the cohort across all areas of the organisation, with the majority sitting in the Services group. With the exception of Research Assistants / Lab-based Technicians, who are embedded within specific research groups, all cohort members work towards a common goal which is to support the delivery of Institute science. There is no siloing of support staff based on research areas.

Figure 2. Babraham Institute organisational structure



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:

Prior to submission there were no formal initiatives, programmes or activities specifically targeted to the Technical Specialist cohort. However, all staff are encouraged to participate in and contribute to Institute life. This includes membership of committees, access to personal and professional development activities and conducting seminars and training sessions. The following examples highlight key initiatives and / or activities that involved Technical Specialists. Where existing initiatives / activities link to our action plan they are highlighted in the grey boxes.

Authorship policy

The Institute recognises the importance of collaborative science in achieving our mission and is committed to creating an environment in which contributors to our research are valued and appropriately recognised. The Authorship Policy was developed in 2019 to provide a framework within which decisions on authorship may be made and to provide mechanisms to resolve disputes over authorship. It clearly describes Institute criteria for authorship versus acknowledgement, and discusses fair attribution of credit in manuscripts or presentations involving Technical Specialists.

The policy was developed via iterative discussions at the Senior Scientific & Support Staff (BI-4S) Committee, which is attended by all academic leads and senior managers from the ScienceFacilities and the BSU, who directly benefit from this policy.

Objective 3: Ensure the Institute's policy on authorship and acknowledgement is followed

Continue to endorse this policy; publication data is recorded by the Grants Office and will be used to benchmark compliance.

Personal and Professional Development

Babraham offers support to all colleagues to achieve their full potential. All employees benefit from an induction, personal development plans and an array of training courses including:

- A range of IT and information handling courses
- Networking and team working
- Line Management
- Dignity at Work
- Equality and Diversity
- Unconscious Bias
- Presentation skills
- Time management
- Public Events and Communication Training
- Project management and more

These courses are run by HR and are available to all staff, including Technical Specialists. Consultation via the TCSG indicated that awareness of and access to training courses can be variable; this will be looked at as part of the action plan.

In addition to the training Technical Specialists are able to access via HR, they are also directly involved in training their peers and other researchers within and beyond the Institute. This can range from informal training and mentorship within the lab or facility and critical health and safety training for the use of chemicals, equipment and machinery to more formal training sessions. Two examples of how our Technical Specialists contribute to training is via the Flow Cytometry and Bioinformatics facilities. Both of these run

formal training sessions, either face-to-face or remotely. These are accessed by researchers and facility staff worldwide (including running Bioinformatics training in Australia in 2019). This demonstrates the knowledge and skills of Technical Specialists at Babraham.

Objective 7: Robust Data Collection

We will collect data on the types and frequency of training courses accessed by Technical Specialists

Objective 10: Develop clearer guidelines around how staff can progress in their role

Objective 12: Promote training and other personal professional development activities for cohort

These objectives are intended to clarify access to training for all staff

Annual Lab Talks

Our annual Lab Talks are an internal event designed to showcase the exciting breadth and quality of research at the Institute and provide the opportunity for all Institute scientists to discuss their most recent data and newly developed technologies. Since 2018 the talks have included representations from Technical Specialists, predominantly the Science Facility managers.

Objective 6: Increase the participation of the cohort at inter-institute activities

We will monitor participation at lab talks and consider expanding participation to include more cohort areas or junior members of staff.

Representation on committees

Participation on Institute committees by Technical Specialists has been commonplace for many years. Indeed, it is expected that staff on Band 5 and above (equivalent to senior postdoctoral researchers) are engaged in Institute 'business' and a prerequisite for Band 4 and above. In addition to these requirements, many Technical Specialists at lower grades are involved in committees as a result of their expertise and skills.

The Babraham Executive Committee (BEC), chaired by the Director, is the most senior committee, determining Institute policy and dealing with the highest level of strategic business. It is responsible for the efficient and effective running of the Institute and is where the 'vision' for the Institute is agreed and implemented, following input from other Committees. The membership draws upon all areas of the Institute to ensure decision making reflects the views of all staff, whether scientific or operational; the Technician Committee Institute Lead is a member of BEC. All other committees report into BEC and are broadly split into Operational and Strategic in nature, see Figure 3.

Figure 3. Babraham Institute committee structure



Analysis of the membership shows that make up of operational committees is comprised of ~1/3 Technical Specialists, compared with ~1/4 of the strategic committees. This make up is likely due to the requirement for positions on committees to meet organisational need and knowledge, so the operational committees have a higher requirement for technical skills and expertise.

Since the proportion of Technical Specialists in the organisation is 32% the contribution on operational committees is an accurate reflection of the cohort; however, they are under represented on the strategic committees.

Senior members of the Science Facilities, BSU, Health and Safety and Technical Services are members of BI-4S and the remaining cohort areas are represented on this committee by the Institute Lead, the Chief Operating Officer or Heads of Research Programmes. BI-4s is Chaired by a Technical Specialist.

The TCIL sits on nine of these eighteen committees, so Technical Specialists have a voice through that role.

Objective 7: Robust Data Collection

We will monitor these numbers and include them in the periodic TC reports to BEC, to ensure there is representation of the cohort on decision making bodies.

Research Institutes Technician Commitment Group (RITG)

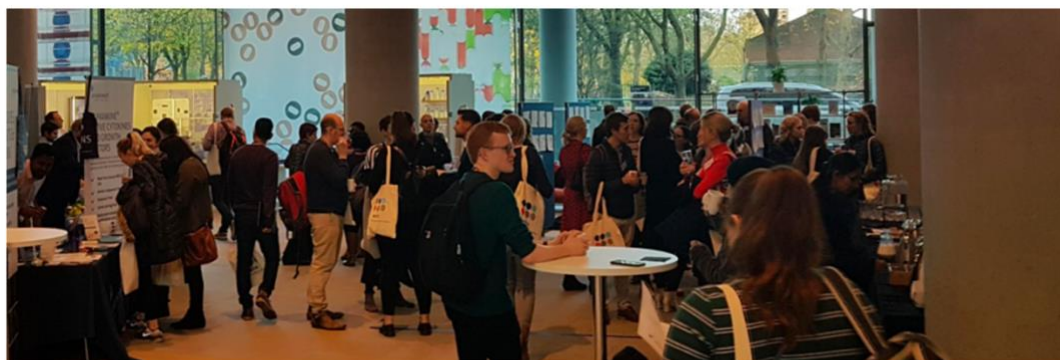
The RITG, established in 2019, is a consortium of six TC signatory Research Institutes; the Institute of Cancer Research, the Babraham Institute, the Francis Crick Institute, the Wellcome Sanger Institute, the John Innes Centre and MRC Institutes including Harwell and LMB.

The aim of the RITG is to facilitate the embedding of the TC pledge within our Institutes. The group meets on a monthly basis to discuss events and share best practise. The inaugural group activity was to organise the first Research Institute Technician Symposium (RITS2019) in November 2019, bringing together staff with technical expertise from across the six Institutes. The overarching theme was 'Career Development for Technicians' and included technician talks representing a mix of early and mid-stage career technicians,

demonstrating the diversity in terms of skills and experience of the different roles. A contributor to this session was a member of the BSU, discussing her progression from Apprentice to Animal Technician and the event was showcased on the Institute website, with a blog post from one participant (Figure 4) who described it thus:

“I have been inspired to class myself as not ‘just’ a technician. I am a skilled research professional who is part of a wide framework of technical departments within my research setting; we are all constants in the transient world of research. We are the backbone of our workplaces and we deserve to be seen.”

Figure 4. Blog post from the Babraham Institute [website](#)



POSTED

10 December, 2019

By Nicola Evans Bailey

My experience of the first Research Institutes Technician Symposium

Other activities

Apprenticeships

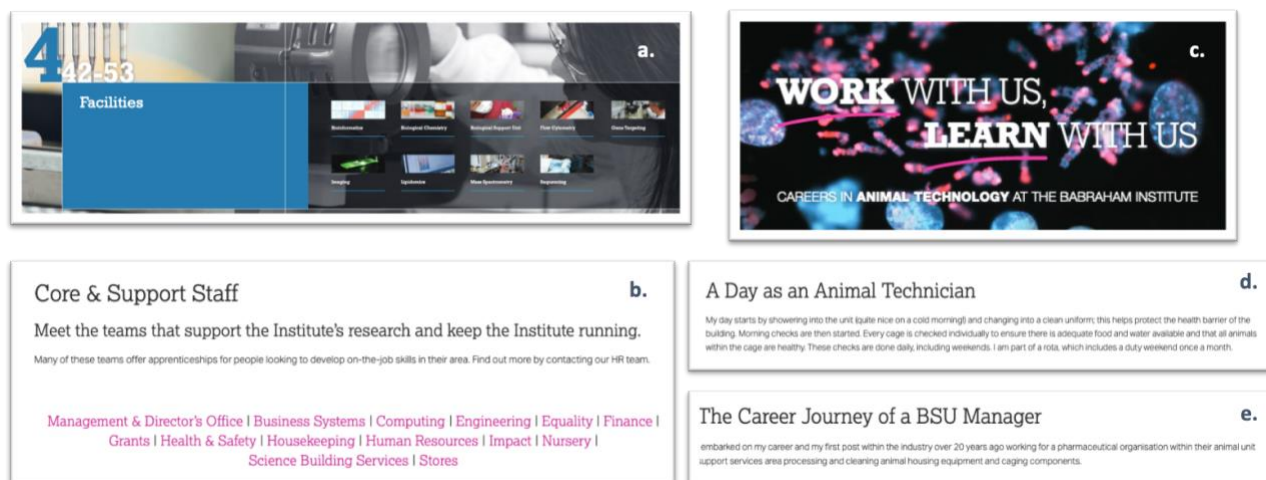
For many years, the Institute has provided early careers support to individuals by hosting apprenticeships. 15 apprentices have started their careers at Babraham in the following areas Nursery (4), Engineering (2), Finance (1), Computing (2) and BSU (6), the latter two areas being Technical Specialist areas. The BSU is an exemplar of best practise in staff training and development. To ensure the highest standards of animal care and service to the researchers using the facility they provide staff with a continuous programme of training allowing them the opportunity to progress with their careers in animal technology (see Figure 5).

Presence in online content

Technical Specialist activities are highlighted in a number of the Institute’s communications and social media messages. The Annual Research Report is a collection of the ground-breaking progress Institute scientists make each year, alongside our plans for the future. Technical Specialists play a prominent role in this, particularly the Science Facilities (Figure 5.a). Furthermore, as a founding signatory of the Concordat on Openness on Animals in Research, the Institute is committed to communicating and engaging the public about our use of animals in research. Therefore, the BSU has a very strong presence on the website alongside case studies of the staff working in the facility.

Figure 5. Communications featuring Technical Specialists

a. Science Facility pages in the Annual Report. b. Information on Core & Support Staff on the external website. c. Online BSU brochure outlining the opportunities for career progression, responsibilities of an animal technician & the qualifications and training available. d & e. Case studies of BSU staff members



Objective 1: Increase the visibility of the skills and expertise of the cohort

Further promote activities in both internal and external content

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion activities

Our equality4success (e4s) programme unites all aspects of the equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) work at the Institute. We are committed to providing an atmosphere which is fair and inclusive, welcoming differences, and valuing and recognising the contribution and potential of all individuals at the Institute. Two Technical Specialists sit on the e4s committee. All staff are encouraged to participate in e4s activities and are included in their regular surveys and consultations. Evidence from these consultations demonstrated the need for initiatives such as the Technician Commitment at Babraham, as well as support networks for other non-academic cohorts of staff.

Non-research staff are included in our Athena SWAN Silver award submission (renewed in 2018). The e4s manager is a member of the TCSG and has identified areas of overlap between the two actions plans (highlighted in the Technician Commitment Action plan). These connections enable us to demonstrate the importance of the actions to our staff and identify priority areas. A copy of the Institute's Athena SWAN action plan can be found on our [website](#).

HR matters

In 2011, the Institute became independent from the BBSRC, assuming governance responsibility and the majority of staff are employed on BI contracts, with a small number remaining on BBSRC contracts. There is single pay scale applicable to all employees and Individuals are governed by the same terms and conditions of employment and subject to the same policies (exceptions being minor differences for staff still employed on BBSRC contracts).

All Individuals are included in bi-annual Engagement Surveys, to determine how they feel about working with us, what we do well, and the areas that could be improved.

Objective 7: Robust data collection

The outcomes of these surveys can be stratified to determine areas of specific relevance to Technical Specialists and provide baseline data to identify trends and priority areas

At the Institute, we strongly believe in the importance of creating a healthy working environment in which both the mental and physical health of staff are equally valued. We have appointed a number of Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs) from different staff groups across the Institute, five of whom are Technical Specialists (from the BSU, Computing, Health & Safety and RA communities). Our MHFAs are champions for the mental health first-aid programme and our wider wellbeing strategy. They are passionate about reducing the stigma associated with mental health issues and normalising conversations around mental health. Three of the Technical Specialist MHFAs are also members of our Wellbeing Steering Group who work together to identify and promote relevant wellbeing activities for staff that are aligned to themes in our annual wellbeing calendar.

Role specific

Technical Specialists are encouraged to participate in role specific training and development opportunities, recognising the mutual benefit for both the individual and organisation. These include conference attendance and staff exchanges between organisations to share and learn best practise (for example within the Flow Cytometry Facility).

Objective 10: Develop clearer guidelines around how staff can progress in their role

Objective 12: Promote training and other personal professional development activities for cohort

These objectives are intended to clarify access to training for all staff

Knowledge Exchange and Public Engagement

The Annual Institute Schools' Day has been running for 28 years and includes a broad diversity of staff from across the Institute. Many Science Facilities support their own student research projects and others work with research groups to provide excellent hands-on student experiences. Additionally, Technical Specialists have an opportunity to discuss how their work is invaluable to the Institute with school students, through these projects and also via panel sessions.

We regularly call on the Technical Specialists to visit schools or support careers events internally to discuss the breadth of opportunity in the science field. This recently included a conference for sixth-form students, as well as participation in a Teacher's Training Day. The Institute has also hosted teachers for week-long science experiences and the technical community were integrated into this programme of activity, including tours of facilities and discussions of supporting research at the Institute. Additionally, a Research Assistant, Technical Services Coordinator, Small Animal Facility Supervisor and the Head of Imaging have been included in our careers [poster and video](#).

The Institute developed a partnership with a School in the Netherlands to deliver hands-on challenge projects which saw students designing laboratories and animal facilities. Staff from the BSU and Technical Services actively participated these activities.

Staff from the BSU are actively involved in a number of engagement opportunities. Whether supporting facility 'virtual' tours for members of the public and schools, or developing schools projects. As previously described, the BSU community have developed a specific careers exhibition and brochure aimed at encouraging people to enter the profession which been used at science festivals and within school career fairs, as well as being a digital resource on the [Institute website](#) (Figure 5).

The Knowledge Exchange & Commercialisation (KEC) Team facilitates Institute impacts through collaboration with other Institutes, networking bodies and commercial organisations; Technical Specialists play an active role in KEC activities. Babraham's location on a thriving research campus provides colocation with over 60 biomedical companies, with whom we collaborate extensively.

The KEC team organise a number of campus events, including the 2020 Babraham Science Week which offers a varied agenda of live and recorded research talks, scientific posters and associated resources to showcase the range of research activities being undertaken on campus, and the scientific services available. The Science Facilities staff played an active role in this, giving spotlight talks, posters and taking part in networking sessions. In addition, Research Assistants, BSU staff and members of the H&S team participated; an estimated 25% of all attendees were Technical Specialists.

Alongside this flagship event, the KEC team also organise regular coffee mornings or Sciences Days, where Technical Specialists are active participants. Furthermore, support for conference attendance can be sought from the KEC Committee and they have provided funding to support the hosting of summer students in Scientific Facilities.

Objective 7: Robust data collection

Monitor participation in KEC & PE events. Staff areas or KEC/PE activities which are underrepresented can be identified and, if relevant, targeted for future participation.

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:

The first TCSG meeting took place face-to-face in February 2020; all subsequent meetings have been virtual. The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on activities at the Institute during 2020, which disrupted a number of planned activities and initiatives.

Between mid-March and May, the Institute solely focused on completing and undertaking essential research, including new COVID-19-related research, and the required maintenance of core support and services. This was completed successfully thanks to the collaborative working of many different teams across the Institute, not least the Technical Specialists cohorts. Senior members of the cohort took a leading role in the Crisis Management Team assembled to manage the immediate response to the pandemic and have contributed to 'Ramping Up' activities which, since June, have enabled the gradual increase in researchers back to our labs, to a point where we have ~ 75% capacity (December 2020).

Despite their considerable efforts in continuing to work during unprecedented circumstances, the TCSG have participated in TC activities and consulted with their cohorts to identify the focus areas for the action plan and develop these into activities and measures of success. These efforts have been acknowledged by senior management at the Institute.

Highlights of 2020, linked Technician Commitment key areas, are described below. Where the initiatives / activities link to our action plan they are highlighted in grey boxes.

Development of intranet pages

VISIBILITY

Dedicated TC pages have been developed on the Institute's intranet. These pages provide an open and accessible repository of information regarding the ongoing work at BI. Pages include an overview of the commitment and the cohort of Technical Specialists, the Steering Group, Terms of Reference and a 2020 Project Plan. Figure 6 shows an example of the type of content available.

Links to these pages are included in communications about the TC to raise awareness of their presence. A new intranet was launched in December 2020 with access to page analytics, so we can monitor how frequently these pages are accessed and whether we need to raise their profile.

Figure 6. Examples of content from the intranet pages

Technician Commitment Steering Group

Scientific Services
Isobel Darlington
Flow Cytometry Technician

Computing
Cass Flowers
IT Systems and Security Manager

Technical Services & Health and Safety
Joshua Davey
Buildings & Facilities Coordinator

BSU
Urszula Karpinska
Transgenics Section Manager

Stores and Purchasing
Lewis Supcick
Laboratory Stores Person

BSU
Laura Wiltshire
Experimental Unit Manager

Research Assistants
Sigrid Fra-Bido
Research Assistant,
Linterman Gorup

Associate Members
Danielle Hoyle, Head of Research Operations – Chair
Gavin Kelsey, Head of Epigenetics – Scientist Advocate
Louisa Wood, Communications Manager – Communications
Elizabeth Wynn, equality4success Manager - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
Kevin Henry, HR Advisor - HR

Babraham Institute Technician Commitment

Home Documents Pages Our Cohort Steering Group Terms of reference Project Plan ...

Send by email

Project Plan

Michael Hinton
Web Development Manager

Technician Commitment Year 1: Project Timeline

DATE	MILESTONE	ACTIONS
04/12/2019	Signatory Date	
16-Dec	Info Site meeting	
13-Jan	Expression of interest meeting	
11-Feb	Steering Group #1	Review ToB; identify key issues; define name for cohort
24-Mar	Steering Group #2	
5-May	Steering Group #3	
16-Jun	Steering Group #4	

Babraham Institute Technician Commitment

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Send by email

Terms of reference

Michael Hinton
Web Development Manager

Background & Context

The Babraham Institute undertakes fundamental research to generate new knowledge about the biological mechanisms underpinning ageing, development and maintenance of health. The Technician Commitment Steering Group (Group), chaired by the Head of Research Operations (HRO), is constituted to embed the principles of the Technician Commitment throughout the Babraham Institute. These principles are to:

- Visibility** - Ensure that all technicians within the organisation are identifiable and that the contribution of technicians is visible within and beyond the institution
- Recognition** - Support technicians to gain recognition through professional registration
- 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 Group is a sub-committee of Babraham Executive Committee (BEC). Recognition of the value the Institute places on this initiative is the inclusion of a member of BEC / Senior Group Leader on the Group, demonstrating engagement and acting as a communication channel.

Objective 1: Increase the visibility of the skills and expertise of the cohort

Further promote activities in both internal and external content

Research Institutes Technician Commitment Group

VISIBILITY, CAREER DEVELOPMENT

The work that was established in 2019 continued during 2020, with the TCIL from the six institute's developing their working relationship and working to conceive of and deliver activities for their organisations. In 2020 the group organised online events to update their respective cohorts on progress to date and facilitate inter-institute networking. A half-day online event focused on 'Managing Your Own Career' will replace the planned symposium in Spring 2021, alongside bitesize events focusing on Professional Registration and Skills Audits (with input from the NTDC) planned during winter 2020/21.

In addition, the following initiatives have been implemented:

- LinkedIn group [Research Institutes Technician Group](#)
- Twitter account @TechnicianGroup
- Establishment of a quarterly newsletter

Objective 1: Increase the visibility of the skills and expertise of the cohort

Objective 8: Develop sustainability and resilience by upskilling people

Use networking channels to encourage the exchange of skills and expertise

VISIBILITY, CAREER DEVELOPMENT

The Institute is a member of the EU-Life alliance of leading research centres in life sciences. There are currently 14 EU-based member organisations, comprising renowned research centres that operate with similar principles of excellence, external reviews, independence, competitiveness, and internationality.

The TCIL is a member of the Core Facilities Working Group and will lead its Career Development Priority Area from 2021. The activities of the TC initiative in the UK and at Babraham have been shared with the group and are being used as impetus for change in other organisations across Europe. Working Group members have also been invited to participate in RITS events, so they benefit not only from Babraham's experiences but a wider group of organisations.

Visibility at the highest level

VISIBILITY

The Institute's Board of Trustees are responsible for the financial management and administration of the Institute and oversees and reviews the management and achievements of the Institute. The initiative was introduced to the Board by the Director in Feb 2020 and they were wholly supportive, commending those individuals who had joined the Steering Group for nominating themselves. Furthermore, TC is discussed at BEC on a quarterly basis. That committee also reviewed the first and final drafts of the Self-Assessment document and Action Plan. These documents have been examined by the HR team to ensure they contain reasonable and deliverable objectives and timeframes, which align with ongoing HR and EDI activities.

The current Head of Epigenetics programme sits on the TCSG, to bring a perspective on how the activities of the group and the Technical Specialists impact on researchers, and vice versa.

Objective 6: Increase the participation of the cohort at inter-institute activities

The TCIL will continue to champion Technical Specialists to increase their participation in inter-institute activities and promote inclusion across all areas

Communications


VISIBILITY

We have been actively working to raise visibility and awareness of TC activities through our communication channels. In addition to preparing bespoke content, the Communications team amplify messages from the TCIL, RITG and other TC-related bodies. Furthermore, we are working to connect messages where possible, to strengthen messages that are relevant to different initiatives, eg EDI and TC. Examples are included in Figure 7. One highlight for the initiative is the tweet sent during National Apprenticeship Week, recognising the important and valuable contributions our apprentices (15 of them Technical Specialists) make to the Institute.

Figure 7. Example tweets and news items relevant to Technical Commitment activities

Babraham Institute
@BabrahamInst

During National Apprenticeship Week, we say thank you to our current apprentices in our animal facility, computing and engineering departments, each person making valuable contributions to our work. We look forward to supporting them throughout their training with us [#NAW2020](#)



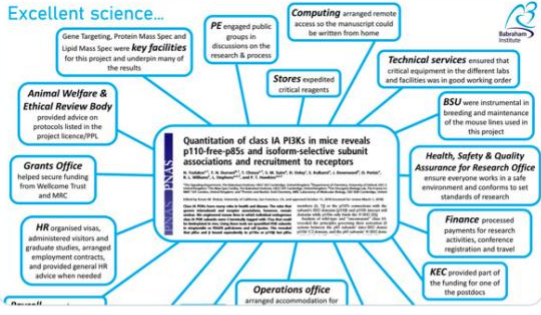
10:25 AM · Feb 5, 2020 · Hootsuite Inc.

Babraham Institute
@BabrahamInst

Our illustration of how every effort counts towards [#research](#) [#excellence](#). We're committed to embedding this recognition, including as a signatory to the [#TechsCommit](#)

Cheryl Smythe @cdws100 · Nov 6

Excited to hear from @UKRI_CEO Dame Leyser at #caselecture20 that they are increasingly thinking about all those who are behind the visible research outputs. Here is how we thought about this last year @BabrahamInst with @equal4success



Institute joins the Technician Commitment

Key points:

- The Babraham Institute joins the Technician Commitment as a signatory.
- Commitment will engage the Institute's technical community to increase recognition and evaluate career support for technical roles.

First Staff Recognition Award

VISIBILITY

In Autumn 2020, the Institute launched the inaugural Staff Recognition Award, established to acknowledge those individuals whose daily activities contribute to the Institute's success. The twice-yearly award will be given to two individuals, four per year in total, to demonstrate the value we place on our people doing a great job. The TCIL worked with HR to set up the award; consultation within the Technical Specialist cohorts identified that the majority of existing prizes were restricted, due to their scope, to research staff. The Staff Recognition Award is open to all Individuals in the organisation and is intended to highlight how we work collaboratively to deliver an effective and high-quality culture.

Due to overwhelming interest, seven awards were made in the first round – two were awarded to Technical Specialists, who made up 40% of the nominees.

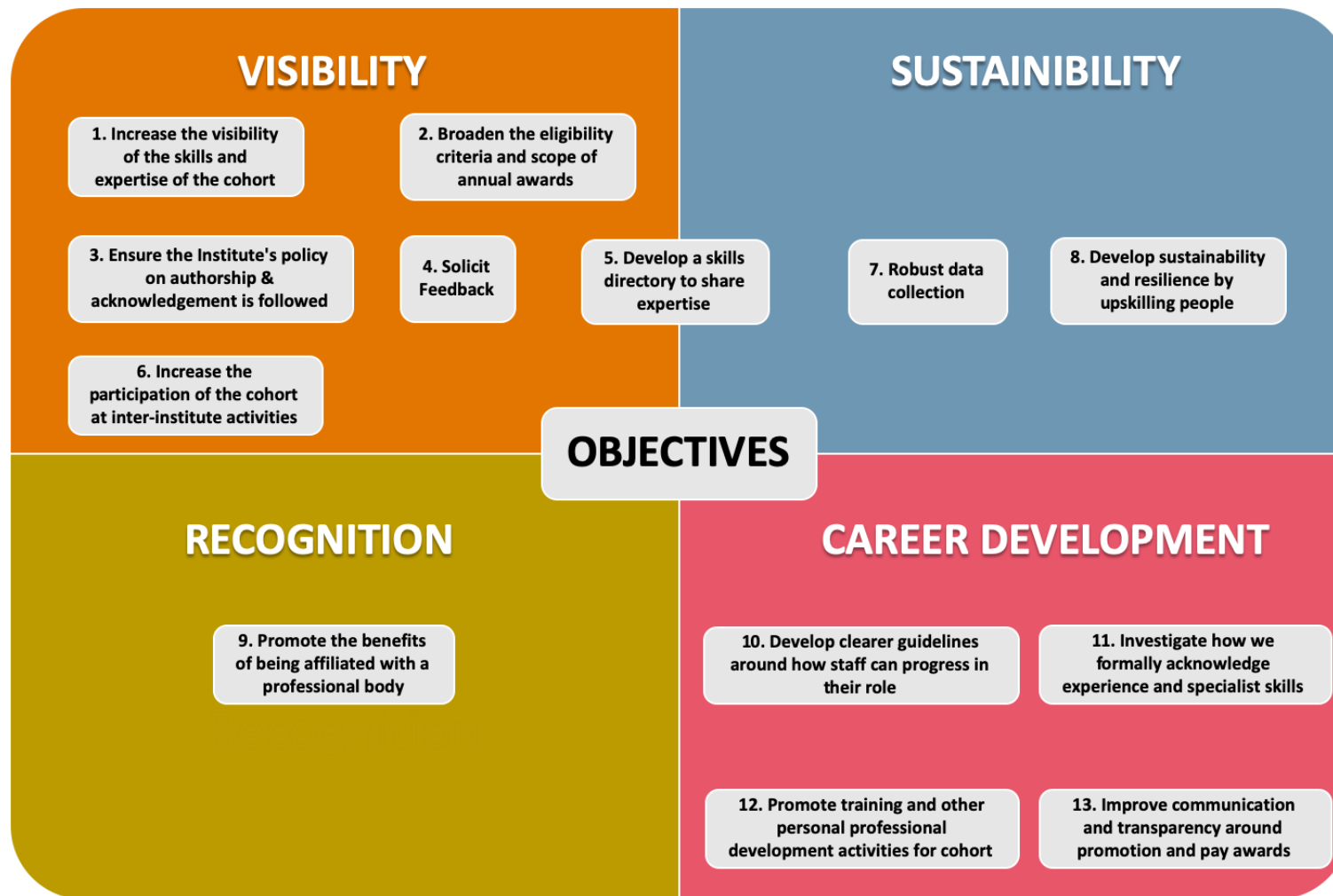
Objective 2: Broaden the eligibility criteria and scope of annual awards

Review the suite of prizes to make more representative for all Individuals

Please provide a 24-month action plan, detailing future plans to ensure your organisations addresses the themes of the Technician Commitment and details of how impact will be evidenced: (this may be detailed here or attached to this document as an appendix):

A detailed 24-month action plan is attached as an Appendix. To provide a high-level overview of our plan, the future objectives are mapped on to the Technician Commitment themes in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Babraham Institute



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

The technician voice has been present throughout the development and formation of the action plan. The TCSG were responsible for consulting with their cohorts to identify the most important focus areas, from which the objectives were developed.

Each member of the TCSG was assigned focus areas to develop into a more coherent objectives, which included specific activities, success measures and timeframes. The agreed objectives have been discussed within cohorts and input returned to the TCSG via the member representatives.

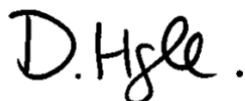
Whilst the self-assessment document has been written by the TCIL, the content was agreed during a meeting of the TCSG.

The TCIL will presented a summary of 2020 activities and the action plan at the Institute townhall in December 2020; enabling further iterations before submission.

Upon submission of the action plan (January 2021), a more detailed action plan will be produced with individual activities mapped to the forecast time period. Each member of the TCSG will be assigned responsibility for implementing and completing the activities, with support from the TCIL, their cohorts and other stakeholders. Furthermore, progress against objectives will be reviewed by BEC on a quarterly basis. This will put ownership of the initiative in the hands of the groups who will benefit most from its success.

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

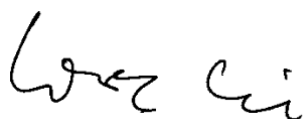
<https://www.babraham.ac.uk/people/technician-commitment>



Signed

Dr Danielle Hoyle, Head of Research Operations and Technician Commitment Institute Lead

Date: 19/1/2021



Signed

Professor Wolf Reik, Acting Institute Director







Date: 19/1/2021










Appendix : Babraham Institute 24-month Action Plan








KEY









RESPONSIBILITY		TIMEFRAME	
All staff	Members of the cohort	Short	< 6 months
HR	Human Resources	Medium	6 - 12 months
Intranet project team	Team developing the intranet	Long	>12 months
Line managers	Line managers of cohort staff		
Grading & Remuneration Committee	Committee related to the grading and remuneration of staff		
TCIL	Technician Commitment Institute Lead		
TCSG	Technician Commitment Steering Group		

	OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES	RESPONSIBILITY	SUCCESS MEASURE	TIMEFRAME:
VISIBILITY	1. Increase the visibility of the skills and expertise of the cohort	<p>! Develop TC intranet pages</p> <p>! Promote activities in Institute newsletters, blog posts, tweets etc</p> <p>! Exploit networking channels, such as Research Institutes Technician Group LinkedIn and Twitter feeds</p> <p>LINKED TO: Athena SWAN Action 4.26 - Improve work culture for non-academic staff</p>	<p>! TCSG</p>	<p>✓ Technicians have increased visibility throughout BI and feel more valued, indicated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - intranet pages updated at the end of each month - a technician highlight post published monthly on various BI media outlets - members of cohort frequently participating in coffee trials to promote work and encourage internal networking - an increase in the number and frequency of authorship / acknowledgement on publications 	<p>⌚ Medium, Ongoing</p> <p>Beginning Q4 2020/21</p>
VISIBILITY	2. Broaden the eligibility criteria and scope of annual awards	<p>! Review the current suite of prizes and identify gaps in representation</p> <p>! Work with HR and other stakeholders to broaden the scope of award & develop specific awards linked to HR values and competencies</p> <p>LINKED TO: HR Reward & Recognition Strategy Athena SWAN Action 4.26 - Improve work culture for non-academic staff</p>	<p>! HR</p> <p>! TCSG</p> <p>! TCIL</p>	<p>✓ Broader range of prizes available, open to a wider cohort of individuals measured by increase % of people eligible for BI awards and prizes</p>	<p>⌚ Long</p> <p>Beginning Q3 2021/22</p>

	OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES	RESPONSIBILITY	SUCCESS MEASURE	TIMEFRAME:
VISIBILITY	3. Ensure the Institute's policy on authorship and acknowledgement is followed	<p>! Ensure wide distribution of the policy for authorship and acknowledgements on research</p> <p>! Distribute to all staff and students at induction</p> <p>! Include policy on the induction checklist for managers</p> <p>! Highlight as a 'high profile' policy at the policy launch event</p> <p>! Routinely share publication data and ask researchers to consider whether they had correctly acknowledged everyone</p> <p>LINKED TO: Athena SWAN Action 4.26 - Improve work culture for non-academic staff</p>	<p> TCSG</p> <p> TCIL</p> <p> All researchers</p>	<p>✓ Increase in the number and frequency of authorship/acknowledgements on publications</p> <p>✓ All managers distribute Institute's policy on authorship and acknowledgments to new starters</p> <p>✓ Increased discussion between about expectations around acknowledgments and authorship</p> <p>✓ Include this on the induction checklist for managers</p>	<p> Medium, Ongoing</p> <p>Beginning pre-submission</p>
VISIBILITY	4. Solicit feedback	<p>! Encourage solicitation of feedback by positive "advertising" throughout site such as message board messages, leaflets, posters around site, etc</p> <p>! Participation in the HR Reward and Recognition strategy development</p> <p>LINKED TO: HR Reward & Recognition Strategy Athena SWAN Action 4.26 - Improve work culture for non-academic staff</p>	<p> TCSG</p>	<p>✓ Survey cohort to identify whether their perception of receiving feedback has increased;</p>	<p> Short, Ongoing</p>

	OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES	RESPONSIBILITY	SUCCESS MEASURE	TIMEFRAME:
SUSTAINABILITY / VISIBILITY	5. Develop a skills directory to share expertise	<p>! All staff should be encouraged to complete their Delve profile to include skills and expertise</p> <p>! Develop a set of keywords that can be used to aid searching</p> <p>! Identify essential user attributes which would be beneficial to share</p> <p>LINKED TO: HR Learning & Development Strategy</p>	<p> TCSG</p> <p> Intranet project team</p> <p> All staff</p>	<p>✓ % of cohort who complete the essential attributes in their Delve profiles</p>	<p> Short -> Medium</p> <p>Beginning Q1, 2021/22</p>
VISIBILITY	6. Increase the participation of the cohort at inter-institute activities	<p>! Liaise with organisers and senior managers to identify opportunities for inclusion</p>	<p> TCIL</p>	<p>✓ Increased frequency of cohort participation in inter-institute activities</p> <p>✓ Presentations from Technical Specialists at Annual Lab Talks and Institute retreats</p>	<p> Continuing</p>
SUSTAINABILITY	7. Robust data collection	<p>! Identify which datasets are required to demonstrate impact of the Technician Commitment to internal and external stakeholders</p> <p>! Establish mechanisms for data collection and analysis on a regular basis</p> <p>LINKED TO: Athena SWAN data collection exercise</p>	<p> HR</p> <p> TCIL</p>	<p>✓ Data is readily available for reporting purposes</p>	<p> Long, ongoing</p> <p>Beginning Q4 2020/201</p>

	OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES	RESPONSIBILITY	SUCCESS MEASURE	TIMEFRAME:
SUSTAINABILITY	8. Develop sustainability and resilience by upskilling people	<p>! Identify the current skills and capabilities of Technicians at BI by conducting a skills audit</p> <p>! Encourage exchange of technical skills between technicians - both within and between Institutes</p> <p>! Development of inter-institute networks</p> <p>! Provide straightforward and transparent access to training and personal and professional development opportunities</p> <p>LINKED TO: HR Learning & Development Strategy</p>	<p> HR</p> <p> TCSG</p> <p> TCIL</p>	<p>✓ Knowledge / skills gaps are identified and considered as part of long term Institute recruitment and retention strategy</p> <p>✓ Increased participation in networking activities</p> <p>✓ Staff access greater range of training opportunities - measured by number of training activities</p>	<p> Skills audit - Long</p> <p>Beginning Q1 2022/23 at earliest</p> <p> Other activities</p> <p>Short -> Medium</p> <p>Began pre-submission</p>
RECOGNITION	9. Promote the benefits of being affiliated with a professional body	<p>! Create intranet page for professional registration information</p> <p>! Promote informative events regarding professional registration.</p> <p>LINKED TO: Athena SWAN Action 4.3 - Professional Bodies</p>	<p> TCSG</p>	<p>✓ Increased awareness of the benefits of professional registration</p> <p>✓ Broader range of affiliation with professional bodies</p> <p>✓ Year on year increase in number of Technical Specialists affiliated with professional bodies</p>	<p> Short -> Medium</p>

	OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES	RESPONSIBILITY	SUCCESS MEASURE	TIMEFRAME:
CAREER DEVELOPMENT	10. Develop clearer guidelines around how staff can progress in their role	<p>! Consistently prepare clear job descriptions indicating progression targets; offer training to line managers on developing useful job descriptions</p> <p>! Promote development opportunities i.e. seminars, training, collaborations with other establishments</p> <p>! Continue to participate in apprenticeship schemes, where relevant</p> <p>! Encourage discussions on progression and development and accuracy of job description during annual appraisals</p> <p>! Contribute to the development of a new appraisal system</p> <p>LINKED TO: HR Learning & Development Strategy Athena SWAN Action 4.4 - Apprenticeships Athena SWAN Action 4.5 - Training</p>	<p> HR</p> <p> TCSG</p> <p> Line managers</p>	<p>✓ Transparent guidelines in place that specify progression criteria, to identify career stepping stones within and beyond the institute</p> <p>✓ Examples of technical specialists successfully applying for development roles and progressing within and beyond across the institute</p> <p>✓ Development of more useful job descriptions, aligned with industry standards, and including details on roles and responsibilities</p> <p>✓ Increased feedback of job descriptions during annual appraisals</p>	<p> Medium -> Long</p> <p>Some activities began pre-submission</p> <p>Job description training beginning Q3 2021/22 at earliest</p>
CAREER DEVELOPMENT	11. Investigate how we formally acknowledge experience and specialist skills	<p>! Initiate discussions around introducing changes to job titles to reflect progression and expertise with the aim of developing standardised job titles</p> <p>! Encourage discussions on accuracy of job titles during annual appraisals</p> <p>! Initiate discussions on how recognition progression may be compensated</p> <p>! Provide training to managers to ensure they are skilled to handle conversations about progression and compensation</p> <p>! Contribute to the development of a new appraisal system</p> <p>LINKED TO: HR Learning & Development Strategy</p>	<p> HR</p> <p> TCSG</p> <p> Line managers</p>	<p>✓ Development of a consistent approach to recognising progression, irrespective of role or department - to be part of appraisal and subsequent review by Grading & Remuneration Committee</p> <p>✓ Improved staff retention and fulfilment because their expertise are being utilised - periodic surveys to assess how staff feel their skills are being utilised</p>	<p> Long</p> <p>Beginning Q1 2022/23 at earliest</p>

	OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES	RESPONSIBILITY	SUCCESS MEASURE	TIMEFRAME:
CAREER DEVELOPMENT	12. Promote training and other personal professional development activities for cohort	<p>! Ensure all line managers discuss training and development during annual appraisals</p> <p>! Make access to training and development transparent</p> <p>! Create intranet content highlighting upcoming conferences and training opportunities</p> <p>! Develop cohort mailing list share notifications about relevant events / include in newsletter</p> <p>! Discuss the development of grant or fund that can be applied to for activities outside typical training activities</p> <p>LINKED TO: HR Learning & Development Strategy Athena SWAN Action 4.3 - Professional Bodies Athena SWAN Action 4.5 - Training</p>	<p>HR</p> <p>TCSG</p> <p>Line managers</p>	<p>✓ HR to remind line managers that training and development is an essential part of appraisal process; compliance could be measured by speaking to a representative group of staff</p> <p>✓ Increased numbers of cohort attending and development activities</p> <p>✓ Development of intranet and newsletter content specific to the cohort</p> <p>✓ Cohort members could opt in to a mailing list - success measured by increasing number of members annual</p>	<p>🕒 Medium</p> <p>Began pre-submission</p>
CAREER DEVELOPMENT	13. Improve communication and transparency around promotion and pay awards	<p>! Linked to previous objectives, develop clear advice regarding development in a role</p> <p>! Improve clarity on what merits an exceptional pay award and feedback on unsuccessful nominations</p> <p>! Ensure the Grading & Remuneration Committee consider roles holistically and do not use simple metrics of success</p> <p>! Develop anonymous case studies of successful exceptional pay awards as guidance for staff and line managers</p> <p>! Contribute to the development of a new appraisal system</p> <p>LINKED TO: HR Reward & Recognition Strategy Athena SWAN Action 4.17 - Promotion process for</p>	<p>HR</p> <p>Grading & Remuneration Committee</p> <p>TCSG</p> <p>Line managers</p>	<p>✓ Following appraisal, staff are aware of what is expected of them over the next 12m and what training they are able to pursue</p> <p>Higher proportion of successful exceptional pay awards</p> <p>✓ Development of intranet content on what constitutes a legitimate case for an exceptional pay award</p> <p>✓ Grading & Remuneration Committee review job descriptions alongside bids for exceptional pay awards</p>	<p>🕒 Medium -> Long</p> <p>Beginning Q3 2021/22 at earliest</p>