

31st March 2021

FAO: Gail Reeves
Head of Technical Services
University of Exeter
Mail Room, The Old Library
Prince of Wales Road
Exeter, Devon
EX4 4SB

Re: Technician Commitment – Self-Assessment & Action Plan

Dear Gail,

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 Exeter submission.

The institution's approach to the Technician Commitment since becoming a signatory:

Whilst the University of Exeter University is physically distanced across many sites of Devon and Cornwall, it is clear they have a defined technical lead and structure, which assisted them in the immediate formation of a TC Committee and the many subgroups, to deliver the action plan with a clear pathway for the escalation of requests and funding when required. A dedicated technical services project manager has enabled a focused approach to oversee and deliver the action plan.

The institution has continued to build upon the significant changes of 2015, when technical staff were brought into a single professional grouping. They have implemented a clear management structure and the wider technical services role families and demonstrate a clear understanding of their workforce. This has been a springboard to enable the positive initiatives since signing the Technician Commitment. The implementation of the service wide training budget, enabling access to

external training and conferences is recognised as a positive initiative having impact on the career development of technicians.

The Head of Service has been able to raise the profile of technicians at senior levels and this approach is commended for enabling visibility and recognition at an institutional level.

The RAG analysis provided:

The technical voice is perfectly demonstrated with individual profiles, posters, and presentations.

The RAG analysis continues to demonstrate the value given to understanding the technical community across the Institution and the impact individuals have on research and teaching. The 120 “above and beyond” awards and other awards demonstrates a considerable effort to ensure technicians are recognised and rewarded for the value they add to University activities. The blended approach to recognising and valuing both teaching and research activity is commended.

The panel made the following observations:

- *It is pleasing to note that staff can move throughout the institution for training, how that works with across different sites, must be quite a challenge. The panel wondered if travel assistance was provided to facilitate this.*
- *In challenging times there are always positives; the panel were pleased to hear about the positive work of technicians during the pandemic, particularly experimental officers working together on COVID SOPs and the adaptation to online training sessions with technical staff.*
- *Changing University policy to ensure inclusion of technical staff on publications can be less than straight forward, it is excellent to hear of perseverance on this.*
- *Exeter has highlighted the importance of career development, evidencing that over 15% technical colleagues successfully applied for roles on higher grades. There is a balanced approach to delivering a pipeline of technical talent through apprentices as well as more senior opportunities to move through the organisation.*
- *The efforts made to encourage professional registration is recognised and the panel commends the initiative to enhance the opportunities for female technical leadership within the institution. The case studies within the report further evidenced the impact that the Technician Commitment is having on individuals.*

- *The review of governance and communication has demonstrated a commitment to visibility of technicians at all levels. It is noted the institutional impact on this work with the inclusion of Technical Services in the upcoming University strategy.*
- *Overall, recognition, training, networking, and visibility within the institutions are all strongly evidenced in the RAG.*

Evidence of how the action plan has had/is having impact:

Using metrics, examples and case studies the institution has made significant efforts to evidence impact. The case studies give a real sense of the individual impact of changes being made and the benefit this is having. It also references the impact staff are having on research through involvement in academic publications. It was an excellent illustration of the technical voice and a super addition to Exeter's report showing individual technician's journeys. The panel found it a joy to read.

The use of data around the structures and overall make up of technical staff across the institution shows a good understanding of the staff profile which enables a more targeted approach to initiatives. External award nominations can be time consuming but the success at Exeter benefits the national drive for professionalisation and recognition.

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

There is a high level of engagement with the TC steering group at Exeter which is positive to see. There is a good understanding of staff within the single professional home of Technical Services. The panel advises that Exeter explore how the themes of the Technician Commitment could be applied to other staff groups that may align with technical roles, for example, estates or IT Services.

The panel suggests that Exeter present their work on CATTTS at a Technician Commitment Signatory Event, sharing their progress with the wider Technician Commitment community.

The Institutions 36-month action plan:

It would have been beneficial to demonstrate what success would look like in the form of SMART objectives, to formulate the action plan into a relatable and realistic document to communicate to the technical community. The panel liked the approach to setting out a high-level objective/vision

and then breaking that down into actions. The panel would like to see how technical staff are leading areas of the action plan to ensure shared ownership of this agenda.

This is an accomplished, professional report, highlighting great achievements and ambition for the future. The panel thought the technician voice could have been illustrated more strongly in the dialogue e.g. some personal contributions from technicians who have benefited from Exeter's huge investment and drive.

Overall, the report was hugely positive and will be an uplifting read for the technicians at Exeter.

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 Exeter to further increase visibility, recognition, opportunity and sustainability of this vital community.

Yours sincerely,



Helen Pain CSci CChem FRSC

Chair of the Technician Commitment Steering Board



Kelly Vere MBE

Technician Commitment Lead