HERIOT-WATT UNIVERSITY TECHNICAL SERVICES INSTITUTIONAL ACTION PLAN 2026-2028

Our community of technical services colleagues are dedicated to supporting the delivery of high- quality teaching and research across a range of disciplines at Heriot-Watt. This action plan builds on the initial HW Technician Commitment action plan for 2022- 2025, where a foundation was established for greater technical services visibility and recognition across Heriot-Watt, alongside addressing challenges around career progression and long-term sustainability of technical services at all campus locations.

Our second action plan runs from Jan 2026 – Dec 2028 and continues to focus on the core Technician Commitment themes, but with a particular emphasis on **career progression** as the identified priority from our technical community.

The plan will be implemented in line with Heriot-Watt's values of Belong, Inspire, Collaborate and Celebrate.

Acronym	
LTA	Learning & Teaching Academy
MRAC	Marketing, Recruitment, Admissions & Communications
POD	Professional & Organisational Development
RED	Research Engagement Directorate
RGT	Research Grants Team
TSSG	Technical Services Steering Group
UCLT	University Committee for Learning & Teaching
UCRI	University Committee for Research & Innovation

No.	Objective	Actions and deliverables	Timescale	TALENT Commission ref.	Responsibility
Theme: VISIBILITY *Ensure that technical services colleagues within the organisation are identifiable and that the varied contributions made by this community are visible within and beyond the institution*					
1.	**Build on the progress achieved through the HW Technical Services Programme to establish a forum for co-ordinating technical services activities across HW. This will encompass the Technician Commitment action monitoring and provide scope for a more integrated approach to supporting technical services**	(i)Establish a Technical Services Steering Group with representation across Schools, GRIs and campuses. The purpose of this group will be to ensure a more integrated approach around support for technical services, the sharing of best practice and the oversight of the Technician Commitment Action Plan implementation.	2025-26	R12	TSSG / Schools / GRIs
2.	**Establish a framework for managing and resourcing Technician Commitment initiatives and action plan monitoring more effectively**	(i)Establish Technician Commitment sub-groups, reporting into the overarching Technical Services Steering Group. The sub-groups will focus on the key TC themes, with a group for Visibility & Recognition, one for Career Progression and one for Sustainability.	2025-26	R12	TSSG
		(ii)Recruit Technician Commitment Champions, aligned with specific TC working groups			

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3.	**Ensure appropriate representation from and engagement with technical services in institutional governance structures**	(i)Engage with the Deputy Principals and key University committees - e.g. University Committee for Research & Innovation; University Committee for Learning & Teaching – to explore ways in which the technical services voice can feed in appropriately. This could be through regular reporting, regular/occasional representation, participation in sub-groups/working groups etc.	2025-26	R12	TSSG
4.	**Continue to develop technical services presence on University internal and external communications channels, using this to both enhance visibility of technical services contributions and to support community building across technical services**	(i)Develop the external facing technical services pages on HW website to help make visible the technical services population and showcase technical services careers	May-June 2026	R11	TC Visibility Group / MRAC
		(ii)Expand the suite of technical services staff profiles, ensuring representation across Schools, GRIs, campuses and reflecting the diversity of the technical services population	2026-27		
		(iii)Launch the Technical Services newsletter on a quarterly basis and work to ensure that technical services feature in University-wide internal and external media	April 2026		
		(iv)Complete the development of the technical services image bank, to ensure representation across all Schools, GRIs and campuses and ensure that this is updated regularly, and is known as the repository for technical services imagery. Work with MRAC to enhance technical services visibility in prospectuses	June 2026		

No.	Objective	Actions and deliverables	Timescale	TALENT Commission ref.	Responsibility
		(v)Further development of technical services social media presence, ensuring that technical services are represented on University and School/GRI social media channels, across campuses.	Sept – Dec 2026		
5.	**Support and encourage technical community events**	(i)Support technical services to hold internal events – e.g. cross-School visits, networking – including allocation of funding. (ii)Encourage members of technical services to participate in other institutions' events and promote these actively. (iii)Explore opportunities for co-hosting technical services events with other Edinburgh institutions through ETC.	2026-28	R15	TC Visibility & Recognition Group
Theme: RECOGNITION **Support technical services to gain recognition through professional registration and awards**					
6.	**Support mechanisms to ensure recognition of technical services contributions to research**	(i)Develop fair attribution policy that recognises technical services contributions to research	2026-27	R11	RED / TSSG
		(ii)Explore scope for technical services staff to have PURE profiles through the UCRI research information systems sub-group			UCRI information systems sub-group

No.	Objective	Actions and deliverables	Timescale	TALENT Commission ref.	Responsibility
		(iii)Address costing of technical time on research projects, ensuring that there is clarity around the need to cost in time, the appropriate level, and ensuring visibility of costings before bids are submitted			TSSG / RED / RGT
7.	**Support mechanisms to ensure recognition of technical services contributions to learning and teaching**	(i)Promote Advance HE status and the scope within the Learning & Teaching Academy to support technical services colleagues seeking to apply for Advance HE status, as well as the broader support for technical services colleagues who teach	2025-26	R11	TSSG / TC Technical Services & Teaching Group
		(ii)Explore mechanisms for capturing more effectively the involvement of technical services in planning and feedback relating to taught programmes – e.g. involvement in Boards of Studies, involvement from technical services in the planning of new programmes/courses.	2026-27		
8.	**Support and promote opportunities for technical services to achieve professional registration**	(i)Continue to provide funding for technical services to apply for professional registration, and enable individuals interested in professional registration to connect with colleagues who already hold this.	2026-28	R10	TSSG / POD / TC Technical Services Career Progression Group / LTA

No.	Objective	Actions and deliverables	Timescale	TALENT Commission ref.	Responsibility
		(ii)Explore joining the Science Council Employer Network	2027-28		
		(iii)Recognition and support of the contribution to teaching made by technical services roles through supporting colleagues to achieve Advance HE accreditation.	2026-28		
9.	**Visible recognition of technical services contributions through the Technical Services Excellence Awards**	(i)Ensure greater promotion of the Technical Services Excellence Awards and develop profiles of winning and highly commended staff to help recognise success.	2026-27	R11	TC Visibility & Recognition Group / POD / MRAC / Schools / GRIs
10.	**Promote visibility of individual members of technical services**	(i)Promote and develop the technical services list on the Technical Services Hub as a mechanism for making the full range of technical services support more visible, and showcasing individual specialisms	2025-26	R11	TC Visibility & Recognition Group
11.	**Showcase and engage technical services more clearly and visibly in outreach activities**	(i)Technical services involvement in Open Days/offer holder days (ii) Use outreach events (e.g. Doors Open Days) to help showcase technical services careers	2026-27	R6	TC Visibility & Recognition Group / Schools / GRIs / MRAC

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12.	**Ensure HW technical services is building its visibility on - and engagement with - external fora and developments**	(i)Continue to evolve the Edinburgh Technical Collaboration with University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh Napier and Queen Margaret, exploring other opportunities for connecting around technical services (for example, promoting technical services events and opportunities through the network)	2026-28	R11	TC Visibility & Recognition Group
		(ii) Engage with the InFRAME project through liaising with the project leads	2025-27		TC Research Group / RED
		(iii) Broaden HW technical services representation on the Scotland Technician Network	2026-27		TC Career Progression Group
Theme: CAREER PROGRESSION **Enable career progression opportunities for technicians through the provision of clear, documented career pathways**					
13.	**Develop the technical services career pathways further to clarify routes for progression, and to encompass all technical services roles**	(i)Expand on the career pathway work completed thus far to include technical roles that are currently missing, and engage in current discussions on technical career pathways through key fora (e.g. ITSS Career Pathways Lab) to help formulate an approach that works for HW	2026-28	R2 ; R9	TSSG / TC Career Progression Group / POD

No.	Objective	Actions and deliverables	Timescale	TALENT Commission ref.	Responsibility
		(ii)Establish a TC Career Pathways Group to take forward the career pathways work, and incorporating representation incorporating HW input into UK RAS-STEPS (for Robotics technicians)			
		(iii)Run sessions on technical services career pathways and provide exemplars of staff careers (including 'squiggly' careers as well as more linear progression) Include exemplars of individuals who have moved from technical services to academic/research roles and vice versa to help demonstrate the different types of moves that are possible, and how these are achieved	2026-27		
14.	**Expand suite of generic job descriptions**	(i)Undertake further work on the technical services job descriptions to ensure that all roles are captured and clarified, including Apprentice, GR4 Technician and Research Technical Professional (RTP) roles.	2026-27	R9	TC Career Progression Group / HR
15.	**Continue to offer mentoring and job shadowing opportunities to technical services**	(i)Build on the success of the ETC mentoring and job shadowing scheme for technical services by featuring more clearly the benefits experienced by participants in the scheme	2026-28	R10	TC Career Progression Group / POD

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16.	**Ensure that technical services are provided with training opportunities aligned with their needs**	(i)Explore the ways in which the existing technical services training matrix can be rolled out/adapted within other parts of technical services (e.g. GRIs, externally-funded teams)	2026-27	R10	TC Career Progression Group / POD/ RED
		(ii)Ensure that all line managers of technical services are aware of the training and development opportunities for technical services. Specific actions required to support academic/research staff managing technical services roles			
		(iii)Create a technical services career development programme specifically for managerial roles in technical services (covering line management, identifying training needs, regrading)			
		(iv)Ensure better signposting of technical services development opportunities through the Technical Services Hub, Professional & Organisational Development, improved line manager knowledge and the technical services newsletter			
		(v)Engage with existing HW project to develop a programme for mid-senior researcher development, to explore areas that may be relevant to technical services			
Theme: SUSTAINABILITY **Ensure the future sustainability of technical skills across the organisation and that technical expertise is fully utilised**					

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17.	**Ensure that technical services planning is clearly integrated into broader School and institution-wide strategic and operational plans.**	Use the Technical Services Steering Group to help support this integration. This will be a key focus for the TSSG which will be established in 2026.	2026-28	R1	TSSG
18.	**Capture and evaluate the technician experience in a more structured and robust way, linking appropriately with HW Research Culture, EDI, Student Experience and other initiatives**	(i)Ensure that the Technical Services Experience survey runs on an annual basis to gather feedback and monitor progress against the TC Action Plan (ii)Integrate TC, Research Culture and EDI initiatives appropriately, to ensure that technical services experiences and contributions are mainstreamed fully within the organisation (iii) Undertake data analysis of the technical services workforce, understanding gender balance and ethnic diversity. Engage appropriately with institution-wide EDI and Athena SWAN initiatives to help support all members of our technical workforce and to attract greater diversity of applicants to our roles. Continue to promote gender-specific technical services training opportunities such as the Herschel Programme.	2026-28	R4	TSSG / RED / HR

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19.	**Address recruitment challenges within technical services**	(i)Develop the external facing technical services webpage on the University's website and link it through to the 'Work for Us' information on the site, in order to help increase understanding of the value of technical services roles and the benefits of a technical services career. Feature profiles of current members of technical services at different career stages. (ii) Technical services colleagues are involved extensively in the recruitment processes already but seek to expand involvement further, ensuring that colleagues are trained appropriately. (iii)Utilise outreach opportunities to promote technical services careers (see action 11(ii)	2026-27	R1; R8	TSSG / TC Sustainability and Visibility/Recognition Groups
20.	**Undertake workforce planning to ensure that the shape of the technical services workforce aligns with institutional needs**	(i)Undertake technical services workforce planning with the support of HR, linked to HW's Strategy 2035. This will be important in aligning the technical services skills profile with institutional requirements.	2026-28	R1; R3	HR / Technical Services Steering Group / Senior Technical Services Managers
21.	**Ensure continuation of technical services apprenticeship scheme**	(i)Evaluate effectiveness of the apprenticeship schemes to date and build a case for resourcing to recruit further apprenticeships, as part of supporting the skills and succession planning for technical services.	2026-27	R7	Senior Technical Services Managers/Technical Services Managers/Apprenticeship Co-ordinators/HR

No.	Objective	Actions and deliverables	Timescale	TALENT Commission ref.	Responsibility
		(ii) Develop clear policies and supporting materials for apprentice development, taking into account the needs of different types of apprenticeships (e.g. Modern Apprentices – labs, Modern Apprentices – workshops, Graduate Apprentices)			
		(iii) Explore scope for further Science Foundation Apprenticeships (dependent on capacity of technical teams to host these)			
22.	**Address visibility of and access to facilities**	(i)Evolve the asset register and explore a common system for the booking of equipment/facilities and tracking of usage	2027-28		TC Sustainability Group
23.	**Capture and clarify costing and utilisation of technical time**	(i)Engage in work to clarify the costing of technical time (including consultancy) and the costing of research facilities,. This will include technical services involvement in internal working groups as well as HW's engagement with cross-institutional projects such as InFrame.	2026-28	R5	Research Grants / Research Engagement Directorate / Business & Enterprise / Technical Services Steering Group
		(ii)Review effectiveness of technical services job card system and implement roll out to wider areas			