Durham University

Technician Commitment Phase 2 Action Plan
January 2025 - December 2027

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1. Career Development

Objectives	Priority	Strategic Alignments	Rationale for Objective and Technician Voice	Specific Actions / Implementations	TC Pillars	Priority	Action Owners	Success Criteria / Outcome	Timeline for Completion
1.1 Investigate the appropriateness of current opportunities for progression for technical staff and explore and look to pilot a promotional pathway, ensuring that specialist skills and expertise is recognised and rewarded.	High	N8 Talent Commission (Commitment 1, 3, 5, 7) TRTS Durham Job Family Durham Professional Warwick and Liverpool Career Pathways MI Talent Recommendations ITSS Career Pathways Action Group University Athena Swan Action Plan University Strategy P.2.2, 4.2	Exploring and piloting promotional pathways will enhance the recognition and reward for technical staff, and will give colleagues the ambition to progress within their roles. The introduction of such a pathway will benefit the recruitment and retention of skilled technical staff, making roles more viable and attractive. For those with world-leading expertise it provides the opportunity for them to develop as senior leaders in the organisation, especially alongside the creation of the new roles of senior roles such as Expert Technical Specialist (G9) and Professor of Technical Practice (G10). This objective meets our commitment alongside the N8 to the MI Talent Commission commitment to 'investigate the appropriateness of current opportunities for progression for technical staff. We will pilot and, if appropriate, implement alternatives if these are not fit for purpose. We will work towards ensuring Technical Career Pathways are clearly defined, which might also include competency based role descriptors which allow flexibility for specialism.' This objective directly builds on action point 3.4 in our phase one action plan. A selection of technician's response to the 2024 survey relating to career development and areas they feel we should focus on in the phase 2 action plan. "While we now have a route to access funds for development opportunities there is still no clear frame work for career progression of technical staff in the University. There are clear career progression opportunities for other PSS roles and Academic tracks and this is still missing for technical staff with no consideration of the niche skills required for many technical roles meaning it isn't a case of simply jumping from one technical position to another." "Further development and implementation of a promotional progression career pathway for technical staff at Durham. This would be the single most impactful event to career development of RTPs and also address a number of issues with recruitment and retention to specialist technical roles" "Encourage consistency and set up process to address how technician progression is put into practice in all areas of the organisation." "Work towards a comprehensive and achievable career pathway for all DU technical professionals fully endorsed by DU management." "The instalment of a Head of Technical Skills and their initial discussions with senior leadership regarding career pathways have been significant to show that there is a willingness within senior leadership to support technical career development and a recognition that the current career pathway and progression opportunities do not align with the often specialist nature of technical roles."	**1.1.1** Create a working group to review the existing internal pathway and external examples of best practice to map a proposed pilot of a Research and Education Technical Professionals Promotional Pathway (RETP) at Durham. This will include a review of processes and supporting documentation for the application process.	Career Development	High	Head of Technical Skills Career Pathways Working Group Durham Technical Professionals Committee Associate PVC (Research Culture) HROD Provost + Dept Provost PVC Education PVC Research EDI Team Trade Unions	Viable trial pathway designed for Durham with a package of supporting documentation produced relating to application process / guidance for HoDs & line managers	36 months
				1.1.2 Consultation with technical community on pathway benchmarking, criteria and documentation for proposed pilot	Career Development	High	Durham Technical Professionals Committee HROD	Technical Community engagement at consultation event - 60 staff present	36 months
				1.1.3 Design a communications package for the new pilot pathways	Career Development Visibility	High	Marketing and Communications Career Pathways Working Group Associate PVC (Research Culture) Durham Technical Professionals Committee Executive Deans	Clear comms around work being done by TSCG to explore these options	Ongoing
1.2 Identify ways to introduce new strategic senior leadership roles under a new senior leadership structure for technical staff	Medium	N8 Talent Commission (Commitment 5, 7) Durham Professional Warwick and Liverpool Career Pathways MI Talent Recommendations University Strategy R3.2 The Science Transformation Project	Senior leadership roles would provide the University with strategic insight and expertise, both from within Durham but also externally in the wider technical landscape. These posts, which should be embedded in the career pathway structure proposed above, would enable senior technical staff to develop their strategic skills and understanding, enabling them to become senior technical leaders within the University. This would create a career pathway for senior technical managers and provide Durham with strategic leadership in the technical space, bringing benefits to the management and development of facilities, infrastructure and equipment. Roles could include: Head of Technical Skills (G9); Head of Technical Facilities (G9) Director of Technical Strategy (G10). The creation of these roles directly supports Durham / N8s commitment to the MI Talent recommendation: 'All of our universities will look into the appointment of a designated and resourced institutional strategic lead' . This objective directly builds on action point 3.4 in our phase one action plan. A selection of technician's response to the 2024 survey question relating to Senior technical roles and areas they feel we should focus on in the phase 2 action plan. "We need a central / chief tech manager who links across faculty's, facilities and departments, providing parity and oversight" "A Head of Technical Skills to lead on Technical Strategy development and advocate for technical staff at a higher level may help make a bigger impact and help bring the technical services together, lead to more collaboration etc."	**1.2.1** Identify an appropriate funding mechanism for new roles.	Career Development	High	Provost Strategic Technical Advisory Group Exec Deans	Budgets identified and agreed to support new appointments	36 months
				1.2.2 Develop role descriptors, remit and reporting lines for new roles as well as the underlying structures e.g. secondment opportunities within the G9 posts.	Career Development	High	Provost HROD Durham Technical Professionals Committee Strategic Technical Advisory Group	Role descriptors, remit and reporting lines developed Approval to appoint senior strategic technical leaders under discussion	36 months

2. Supporting Structures

Objectives	Priority	Strategic Alignments	Rationale for Objective and Technician Voice	Specific Actions / Implementations	TC Pillars	Priority	Action Owners	Success Criteria / Outcome	Timeline for Completion
2.1 Enable greater advocacy and representation for technical staff on local departmental and institutional groups and committees, providing greater consistency for technical staff representation in planning and decision-making.	High	N8 Talent Commission (Commitment 3, 8) University Strategy R.4.1	Including and increasing technical representation on key committees and management groups will improve departmental planning and institutional decision-making. It will raise the visibility of technical skills across Durham and boost awareness of the specialist facilities housed by the institution by allowing for improved operational planning and delivery of these facilities. Enhanced representation will facilitate greater communication between colleagues, ensuring that technical staff are aware of, and can input on policy developments and horizon scanning. A review of technical representation will highlight good practice as well as inconsistencies, particularly across large technical teams and technical support structures in departments and URIs. In the wider institutional landscape, technical expertise on senior university committees will ensure that the voices of technical experts are included in planning and decision-making, facilitating the University to achieve its strategic aims. Greater technical representation meets our obligation under the Technician Commitment and Talent Commission to ensure that: "Technical staff will be included as representatives on appropriate departmental, faculty and institutional committees whenever possible to ensure their voices are heard and inform decision making". This objective directly builds on action point 1.7 in our phase one action plan. A selection of technician's response to the 2024 survey relating to technical representation within the institution and areas they feel we should focus on in the phase 2 action plan. "Current actions have increased visibility of technicians to other technicians but I feel there is still a lot of work to do to increase visibility amongst other groups in the University" "Continue to support technical representation at high levels of the university and promote need for inclusion of RTP-focused initiatives in organisational strategy (especially surrounding visibility and career development)" "Focus on departmental visibility, visibility within the university is okay at the moment, but visibility within departments is still poor. Technical representation in more governance roles (departmental committees etc.)"	**2.1.1** Approach Committee Chairs of University / Faculties committees to request technical representation and updates to committee Terms of Reference to include technical representation	Visibility	High	Head of Technical Skills PVCR Exec Deans DEDs-R Sci, SSH, A&H	Technical Representation on Senior University Research and Education Committee and others as appropriate. Technical Representation on Faculty Committees for Education and Research.	12 months
				2.1.2 Map current practice across departments relating to technical representation and produce an idealised structure for technical representation in departments and University Research Institutes, ensuring parity of esteem and influence with PSS colleagues e.g. senior technical representation on departmental strategic planning groups for departments with large technical workforces / labs / facilities.	Visibility Recognition	Medium	Head of Technical Skills DPVCR Durham Technical Professionals Committee HoDs URI Directors	Organogram produced outlining consistent representation structures to be used as best practice across departments and clear recommendations for which committees should invite technical representation.	12 months
				2.1.3 Communicate technical representation structures to senior leaders and Senior Technical leadership for implementation.	Visibility	Medium	Head of Technical Skills DPVCR Durham Technical Professionals Committee Exec Deans HoDs	Consistent technical management structures across departments and faculties with technical staff consistently represented on key departmental committees including education, research and EDI committees (and others as appropriate). Senior Technical Managers represented on departmental management groups ensuring that technical staff are involved in strategic planning and decision-making.	12 months
2.2 Review the reporting and decision-making structure of the Technician Commitment Steering Group (Durham Technical Professionals Committee) and ensure that it is appropriately resourced and supported, with clear line of communication upwards into strategic decision making.	High	N8 Talent Commission (Commitment 8) University Strategy R.4.1	The implementation of clear and more transparent processes for the Durham Technical Professionals Committee ensures a more effective committee, able to make and enact strategic decisions that are accessible to the technical community. The development of clear reporting lines upwards within existing governance structures for the Durham Technical Professionals Committee provides greater visibility of the technical voice in University decision-making processes and will give the Durham Technical Professionals Committee a clarity of purpose and vision to effect meaningful change at both local and institutional levels. Alongside greater reporting lines for the Durham Technical Professionals Committee is the need for more formalised and consistent administrative support for the committee and for the Technician Commitment more broadly. Current support has been at the goodwill and availability of departmental and faculty administrators which has led to challenges in communication and reduced the visibility of the committee – especially among technicians. Formalised support would benefit the Durham Technical Professionals Committee and the wider technical agenda as it would allow for clearer and consistent communications, greater planning for activities, and broader visibility of technical staff across the institution. This objective directly builds on action points 1.1, 4.4 and 4.5 in our phase one action plan. A selection of technician's response to the 2024 survey relating to governance and decision making and areas they feel we should focus on in the phase 2 action plan. "We need more inclusion of the voices of technical staff when making planning decisions at both departmental and University level" "Increased senior leadership buy in is critical"	**2.2.1** Review and revise current governance arrangements for Durham Technical Professionals Committee including Committee name, ToRs, roles, membership and tenure. Ensure that these are fully embedded into Durham Technical Professionals Committee.	Sustainability	High	Associate PVC (Research Culture) TGSG	Documentation produced relating to committee name, ToR, roles, responsibilities, membership and enacted within the committee.	12 months
				2.2.2 Embed technical governance into senior University decision-making with clear reporting lines for Durham Technical Professionals Committee.	Visibility	High	Associate PVC (Research Culture) Provost Governance Support Services	Durham Technical Professionals Committee has a clear line of report into senior decision-making committees or a senior leader such as the Provost	12 months
				2.2.3 Establish permanent administrative support for the Durham Technical Professionals Committee and Technician Commitment with a clear funding route.	Sustainability	High	Associate PVC (Research Culture) Provost Durham Technical Professionals Committee Exec Deans Faculty Managers	The appointment of an administrative support role for the Durham Technical Professionals Committee. 0.5 post at G4 (proposal is that this colleague be located in Science Faculty Office).	24 months
				2.2.4 Establish a Strategic Technical Advisory Group comprising of senior technical leaders to shape and advise Durham Technical Professionals Committee and Durham on technical strategy.	Visibility	High	Senior Technical Managers Strategic Technical Advisory Group	Technical Strategy Advisory Group created.	12 months
2.3 Identify internal sustainable funding mechanisms to support technical activities including processes to evaluate their impact and reach across the technical community.	High	University Strategy R.3.2 University Strategy R.4.1	Appropriate and sustainable funding mechanisms are essential to Durham's success in implementing its N8/ MI Talent commitments and TC Action Plan. Funding provision is currently disparate, time-bound and split between ad-hoc departmental provision, Enhancing Research Culture funding, and Science Faculty (principally institutional membership fees). Since the Technicians Enhancing Research Culture fund was introduced in 2022, over 80 awards have been made to technical staff for career development, professional recognition and registration, and for collaboration and knowledge exchange. Evaluation of this funding illustrates that it has been greatly valued by the technical community and has brought benefits to the University research environment by providing colleagues with the opportunity to develop skills, networks and collaborations. Whilst ERC funding will be maintained, this external funding is time-bound and may not be continued by Research England which means a more sustainable mechanism for technical funding is required. This objective directly builds on action points 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 3.1, 3.3, 4.3 in our phase one action plan. A selection of technician's response to the 2024 survey relating to funding for technical activities and areas they feel we should focus on in the phase 2 action plan. "The greatest impact to the technical community has been the creation and ring fencing of the technical research culture funding. this has provided the technical community much needed access to training and development as well as funding for conference attendance to share best practice with the wider community and work collaboratively to influence positive change within the sector" "Technician-focused funding has had a significant impact on the accessibility of CPD opportunities and the ability to justify technician time spent on new and more varied training and development." "The regular communication of internal and external training opportunities coupled with the Technician Enhancing Research Culture fund has led to opportunities for people to take on training and networking opportunities that will help to develop their careers." "We need to identify longer-term institutional funding pot for technician development, in case the Research Culture funding ends."	**2.3.1** Identify sustainable internal funding mechanism for - Technical events within Durham - Institutional membership of NTDC and HEaTED - External training, development, CPD and conferences - Attendance at UK technical events and workshops e.g. HETS - Professional registration and accreditation costs	Sustainability	High	Strategic Technical Advisory Group Provost Durham Technical Professionals Committee Exec Deans	Secure long term sustainable funding for technical development opportunities and events beyond research culture and Technician Commitment funding.	12 months
				2.3.2 Enable better mechanisms for claiming funding and improve finance administration for central funding claims.	Sustainability	High	Research Culture Manager Durham Technical Professionals Committee	Annual reviews of funding streams ensuring administration is fit for purpose - more positive feedback from technical staff through surveys about the funding process.	12 months
				2.3.3 Set up management, evaluation and review re. impact process - especially with regard to EDI along similar lines to the ERC fund currently managed by Research Culture Manager & TSCG.	Sustainability	Medium	Research Culture Manager EDI Unit Durham Technical Professionals Committee	Feedback from the technical community through annual surveys demonstrates the ease of access to funding and the long-term benefits that technical funding has had.	12 months

3. Recognition

Objectives	Priority	Strategic Alignments	Rationale for Objective and Technician Voice	Specific Actions / Implementations	TC Pillars	Priority	Action Owners	Success Criteria / Outcome	Timeline for Completion
3.1 Support and motivate technical staff to undertake professional registration or accreditations to make sure their specialist skills and contributions to teaching and research are recognised and visible.	High	N8 Talent Commission (Commitment 10) University Strategy R.4.2	By encouraging and supporting Technical staff to upskill and engage with recognition opportunities we will be able to develop an upskilled and engaged technical workforce who will be able to support Durham in its ambitions (particularly relating to Science delivery) over the next 10 years. Data from the NTDC skills survey run at Durham in 2023 indicates that: - Only 5% of technical staff have FHEA Accreditation but that 41% of technical staff are involved in formal teaching and 87% in demonstrating - 79% have no professional registration although 64% of Technical Staff are qualified to L6 with 26% qualified at Level 8 Enabling Durham technical staff involved in the delivery of teaching to participate in DELTA (or similar) will bring Durham into alignment with good practice across the sector and when combined with professional registration it ensures that Durham students are receiving high quality teaching by staff who are acknowledged and recognised (both internally by Durham and externally by accrediting bodies) for their professional skills and abilities. This objective directly builds on action points 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.3 in our phase 1 action plan. A selection of technician's response to the 2024 survey relating to professional registration and accreditation and areas they feel we should focus on in the phase 2 action plan. "Support for those technicians who contribute to teaching to have their contribution recognised through collaborative working alongside academics and supported to attain HEA recognition in the same way as early career researchers and postgraduates"	**3.1.1** Advertise funding set up under action **2.3.1** to support professional registration and accreditation, including supporting attendance at training courses relating to the completion of registration / accreditation documentation / training in accreditation processes) for technical staff as well as the cost of the membership / accreditation / renewal fees. Links with action **6.2.3.**	Career Development Recognition	High	Head of Technical Skills Associate PVC (Research Culture) Exec Deans Durham Technical Professionals Committee	10% of technical staff holding HEA accreditation 40% of technical staff with professional registration recognition	12 months
				3.1.2 Set up a workshop on professional registration processes with external / internal speakers or invite external speaker to technician summer conference.	Career DevelopmentReco	Low	Durham Technical Professionals Committee HROD	Workshop delivered to 20 technical staff or session on registration organised at conference.	12 months
				3.1.4 Review the current internal and external routes for technical staff to gain recognition of their involvement in teaching activities via HEA accreditation. Link with action **6.2.3**.	Career Development Recognition	Medium	PVC Education DCAD HROD	Clear training pathways mapped to the various levels of HEA accreditation mapped specifically for technical staff at Durham and communicated widely.	12 months
				3.1.5 Identify opportunities to develop a bespoke Durham DELTA cohort for teaching accreditation for technical staff. Linked with action **6.2.3**.	Career Development Recognition	High	PVC Education DCAD	Increased recognition for the role that technical staff play in the delivery of teaching - including teaching / training at PGT and PhD levels. 1 cohort of training for Durham Technical staff to have undertaken DULTA or equivalent	36 months
3.2 Evaluate and review how technical staff involvement in research, teaching, outreach, impact and knowledge exchange is recognised, supported and acknowledged at Durham.	Medium	N8 Talent Commission (Commitment 2) University Strategy R.3.3, R4.4 MI Talent, The Role of Technicians in Knowledge Exchange: An explorative study Noke, H., Mosey, S. & Vere, K. Understanding university technicians' role in creating knowledge exchange routines and capabilities: a research agenda. *J Technol Transf* (2024). https://doi.org/10.1007/s10961-024-10072-y 3.2.4 links with ITSS Career Pathway Action Group	Technical staff underpin a broad spectrum of research, teaching and knowledge exchange activities at Durham. It is important that this work is recognised, supported and acknowledged. The NTDC skills survey highlighted that: - 87% of technical staff are involved in supporting Research - 22% are involved in widening participation / public engagement and consultancy Technical staff have contributed to the collection, analysis and interpretation of research data; research publications, and funding applications (both PI and Co-I). Across the sector, funding bodies are raising the profile of the role of Research Technical Professionals (RTPs) with several funding calls issued in 2023/24 aimed specifically at this group of staff (e.g. EPSRC RTP Skills platform call in 2023) alongside the more traditional 'equipment focused' funding calls. Ensuring appropriate mechanisms are in place to support RTPs in applying for these types of grant, alongside developing better methods of communications to RTPs highlighting opportunities in order to take full advantage of these emerging funding streams is of vital importance. Alongside RTPs, there is increased focus on the costing of technical time on research grants. 86% of technical staff are core funded via their departments. This means there is often an assumption and perception that technical 'time' doesn't need to be costed onto grants. This means that technical contributions to research grants are often invisible. By developing clear guidelines on when and how it is appropriate to cost technical time into funding applications we allow the research contribution of technical staff to be visible, recognised and rewarded. Our N8 / MI Talent commitment states that: 'We will enable opportunities for technical staff to be considered as co-investigators, co-supervisors, for grants or projects and provide transparent guidelines for how technical staff can be costed into proposals. Where appropriate we will encourage technical staff to be PIs on proposals, with the same levels of support for writing and navigating processes as available to researchers. We will encourage appropriate inclusion of technical staff as authors, co-authors, or contributors on published papers and presentations, providing clear guidance for appropriate inclusion at relevant stages'. This objective directly builds on action points 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.3 in our phase one action plan. A selection of technician's response to the 2024 survey relating to how research, teaching and KE is recognised / supported at DU and areas they feel we should focus on in the phase 2 action plan. "Greater advocacy and support for technical contributions to be recognised in publications e.g. scientific posters in departments alongside those of academics showcasing technical research or technical specialisms" "Credit the technicians involved in research/ teaching in publications. This should be mandatory and start with UG projects, that way graduates entering academia as a career will habitually credit all those who support their work regardless of job title." "The fair attribution policy is incredibly important and gives a formalised document for technicians to use to be able to argue why they need to be recognised in work they have committed to - this will also become more significant in future as REF begins to recognise RTP contribution to research (this should be promoted and adopted throughout the whole university so that any contributions technicians are making to research can not only be recognised fairly but also benefit departments in their REF applications)" It would be great to see more response to and promotion of the fair attribution policy from academics and senior members of the university "Continue pushing the fair attribution policy to see better application of it resulting in a higher number of technical staff recognised in publications"	**3.2.1** Undertake an evaluation of the current methodology employed for costing / including technical time on research grants and produce a set of transparent guidelines to ensure standardised process for ensuring technical involvement with grant production where appropriate (e.g. involving the Library and Collections staff where applicable) and ensuring that technical time, if needed, is costed into grants.	Recognition	Medium	RIS - Research Operations Strategic Technical Advisory Group	Guidelines produced and published on standardised processes for costing technical time onto grant applications Higher awareness amongst technical staff that they can be costed into research grants and that technical time can be recognised and rewarded. Awareness will be measured through pulse surveys of the technical community and reviewed by the Durham Technical Professionals Committee	12 months
				3.2.2 Produce clear guideline with RIS and departments to support technical staff who are PIs and Co-Is on grant proposals, with the same levels of support for flagging funding opportunities to the RTP community, writing and navigating grant application processes as available to researchers.	Recognition	High	RIS - Research Operations and Development Exec Deans HoDs	Increased numbers of RTP focused grants being applied for across Durham. Increased numbers of technical staff as PI / CoIs on grants.	36 months
				3.2.3 Continue to widely communicate the Fair Attribution Policy amongst staff and students	Recognition	High	Library and Collections RIS - Policy and Performance	Wide awareness amongst academic and technical staff as well as students of the Fair attribution policy through Faculty and Departmental Boards of Studies and Research Committees.	ongoing
				3.2.4 Review the current policy for 3 days CPD for PSS staff at Durham in line with The UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, which allows 10 days for CPD each year for staff involved in research. Establish if it is feasible for Durham RTP staff to also have 10 days per year.	Recognition	Medium	HROD RIS DCAD	Clear guidelines produced on CPD allowance for research-active technical staff.	24 months
				3.2.5 Review the availability and access to WorkTribe for technical staff - how many have publications on it / are aware of it / run a training course for technical staff relating to WT.	Recognition	Low	RIS - Systems Library and Collections	Training course on WT run with 20 staff in attendance	24 months
				3.2.6 Review the current role of technical staff in KEF identifying where they are involved and the types of activities / KE being undertaken.	Recognition	Low	Associate PVC Business and Engagement RIS - Business Development	Clear understanding of the types of KE activities technical staff are currently engaged in at Durham.	24 months
				3.2.7 Identify where Durham can increase the visibility of technical staff in national frameworks (especially REF, KEF and TEF),Statements relating to REF / TEF / KEF to include references to technical staff.	Recognition	Low	PVC Research RIS - Business Development and Policy and Performance teams	Statements relating to the technical communities contribution at Durham included in public REF, TEF, KEF statements	24 months

4. Visibility

Objectives	Priority	Strategic Alignments	Rationale for Objective and Technician Voice	Specific Actions / Implementations	TC Pillars	Priority	Action Owners	Success Criteria / Outcome	Timeline for Completion
4.1 Promote technical activity and communication internally at Durham, promoting increased engagement and activity both within and between departments and faculties	Medium	N8 Talent Commission (Commitment 3) Phase 2 Action Plan for Durham Technical Professionals Committee University Strategy R.3.1, R.4.1	As a signatory of the Technician Commitment since 2019, Durham has committed to increasing the visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability of technical careers. As part of the development of Technician Commitment activities, we will foster a community of collaboration and knowledge exchange through regular networking opportunities for technical staff. We will bringing together Special Interest Groups of colleagues (technical, academic and students) with specific shared interests to explore opportunities for collaboration across research expertise and research equipment. This will encourage the removal of barriers and siloed working leading to better cross departmental / faculty networks and communications, which in turn will support the sharing of best practice, techniques and methodologies. This objective directly builds on action points 1.2, 1.4,1.6 in our phase one action plan. A selection of technician's response to the 2024 survey relating to internal technical activity and communication and areas they feel we should focus on in the phase 2 action plan. "Continue to organise varied Tech Network events and encourage marketing team to put out more technician-focused media. Establishment of early career technicians network to increase visibility of technicians at the beginning of their career, the issues they face and the opportunities available to them." "Look to establish meet the technicians events within and across departments such as full open days within depts for tours and awareness raising" "Continue to deliver regular Technician Events. Not only have these raised the visibility and profile of technical staff they have also changed the outlook in terms of participating in events such as this. My team are certainly much more engaged and active with activities such as these more so than used to be" "Promotion of technical achievements in wider university communications, not just within technical networks."	**4.1.1** Continue to deliver regular networking events funded by ERC (or equivalent funding set up under action 2.3.1) for the technical community to increase cross discipline / faculty collaboration. This will include the development of additional Special Interest Groups and networks for junior / trainee staff to set up their own communities of practice and networks for collaboration.	Visibility	Medium	Durham Technical Professionals Committee	Three networking events held a year - one per term and the addition of specific special interest networks and junior staff networks	24 months
				4.1.2 We will seek opportunities to increase the inclusion of technical staff at institutional-level events e.g. Making a Difference event, Staff and PGR inductions etc.	Visibility	Medium	Durham Technical Professionals Committee HROD	Technical sessions held at the annual Staff conference, attended by 30 academic staff relating to technical support and provision Technical staff, facilities and capabilities clearly visible to internal stakeholders.	12 months
				4.1.3 Build on the work of the Mass Spectrometer Users Group and look to develop several key Special Interest Groups.	Visibility	Low	Durham Technical Professionals Committee	Four key skill areas identified and Special Interest Groups established.	24 months
				4.1.4 Identify clear lines of support from Marketing and Communications for the promotion of technical events activities and development opportunities	Visibility	Medium	Marketing and Communications Durham Technical Professionals Committee	Marketing and Communications engaged in promoting and publicising both internal events and external news.	12 months
				4.1.5 Curate a calendar of awards for technical staff(both internal PSS / T&L but also external THE / Papin etc.) and promote them on internal comms both within technical community but also more widely to HoDs etc.	Visibility	Low	Durham Technical Professionals Committee HROD	Diary of Award opening / submission dates for technical staff hosted on technical SharePoint site	24 months
				4.1.6 Develop our communication channels and web spaces, in particular the Technician Commitment webpage and Technician's SharePoint site and Teams page to communicate better stories across our community. Enhance the awareness of key facilities and technical provision within these specialist	Visibility	High	Durham Technical Professionals Committee Research Culture Manager	170 members on the Technical Teams Page Externally facing website refreshed	12 months
				4.1.7 Continue to develop and curate the image bank of technical work enabling the work of technical staff to be more easily showcased in prospectuses and marketing materials	Visibility	Low	Durham Technical Professionals Committee Research Culture Manager	Comprehensive collection of professional images showcasing the work of the technical community	24 months
4.2 Highlight and publicise the work of our technical workforce and facilities externally, ensuring engagement with industry, broader sector discussions, policy developments and networks.	Medium	N8 Talent Commission (Commitment 2, 3, 10) University Strategy R.3.3, R4.4	Durham has an opportunity to be a leader in the technical space. External engagement with ITSS, N8 etc. will increase Durham's influence over national technical developments and policy. By continuing to highlight the work of our technical workforce and world class facilities we can develop opportunities for collaboration and communication which have influence nationally and internationally. Greater visibility of technical events and proactively engaging with internal (technical, academic and student communities) and external (industry / community) stakeholders will facilitate Durham's leadership in the technical space and forge new routes for collaboration and collective endeavour across the sector. This objective directly builds on action points 1.3, 1.5, 2.3, 2.5 in our phase one action plan. A selection of technician's response to the 2024 survey relating to external technical activity and communication and areas they feel we should focus on in the phase 2 action plan. "Looking to develop more external relationships with other HE institutions in our region" "Continue the regular communication of external training opportunities coupled with the Technician Enhancing Research Culture fund to support staff attendance at them" "Investigate cross-institution secondments (e.g. Newcastle, York) Focus on getting departments to encourage it"	**4.2.1** Develop a clear communications framework to enable engagement with news stories and events emerging from our technical community. We will ensure clear visibility of our technical community on our public facing website and highlight key activities and events from the technical community.	Visibility	Medium	Marketing and Communications Durham Technical Professionals Committee	Communication framework produced and implemented.	Jan-25
				4.2.2 Continue to proactively engage with ITSS, HEaTED and NTDC to support technical training and development and engagement with sector best practice.	Visibility	Medium	Head of Technical Skills Research Culture Manager Durham Technical Professionals Committee	Continued involvement with one key ITSS working group e.g. Career Pathway Lab. Continued involvement with one key HEaTED / NTDC working group e.g. Education Career Pathway group.	Ongoing
				4.2.3 Encourage technical staff to engage in externally facing events utilising the centrally managed funding mechanism set up under action **2.3.1**. E.g. Research conferences, Higher Education Technical Summits, ITSS events etc.	Visibility	Low	Senior Technical Managers Durham Technical Professionals Committee Strategic Technical Advisory Group	An increase in attendance of technical staff at key external facing events. E.g. in 2024 50 technical staff are attending the Working in Partnership conference in Newcastle. In 2026 we aim to take 70 staff to this event.	Ongoing
				4.2.4 Develop an externally facing catalogue of facilities and specialisms across the technical services.	Visibility	Low	Strategic Technical Advisory Group Senior Technical Managers Durham Technical Professionals Committee Exec Deans	Catalogue produced and available via SharePoint and external facing website.	36 months
				4.2.5 Look to develop region network across the NE5 institutions.	Visibility	Medium	Head of Technical Skills	Network across the NE5 institutions created. Funding mechanism for NE5 events considered.	24 months

5. Sustainable Workforce

Objectives	Priority	Strategic Alignments	Rationale for Objective and Technician Voice	Specific Actions / Implementations	TC Pillars	Priority	Action Owners	Success Criteria / Outcome	Timeline for Completion
5.1 Develop a strategic approach to the management of technical skills within our workforce, by ensuring our HR processes and practice relating to succession planning, recruitment, job templates, and ADRs are fit for purpose.	High	N8 Talent Commission (Commitment 5, 7) University Strategy P2.4	Across our faculties, departments and URIs there are diverse practices and approaches to recruitment and succession planning. The NTDC survey revealed that in the next 5-years, Durham faces acute challenges in retaining technical knowledge and expertise due to staff retirement. This is compounded by the current challenges in recruiting new technical staff, especially in the unstable UK funding landscape, the technical skills shortage, and external pressures in overseas recruitment. We will work with colleagues to articulate concerns in recruitment and long term succession planning and create opportunities for innovative approaches to these challenges. This directly supports Durham / N8s commitment to the MI Talent recommendation: 'We will take a strategic approach to the sustainability of technical skills and careers and appropriate succession planning through horizon scanning and identifying current and potential future skills gaps'. This objective directly builds on action points 3.4 & 4.1, in our phase one action plan. A selection of technician's response to the 2024 survey relating to HR processes, succession planning, recruitment and ADRs and areas they feel we should focus on in the phase 2 action plan. "Ensure ADR's are completed and possible rewards schemes available are utilised, I feel the university policies should be utilised more"	**5.1.1** Job templates for technical roles will be reviewed to ensure that they are appealing to the technical and industrial communities that we look to recruit from, enabling us to recruit high quality candidates. This is not looking at changes to essential role descriptors but to highlight technical career pathways and opportunities for prospective technical staff to apply for posts at Durham. Aligns with objective **1.1**.	Sustainability	High	Provost HR-OD Strategic Technical Advisory Group Unions	Revised Technical job templates produced. Increased numbers of applications to technical roles.	24 months
				5.1.2 Raise awareness of the 'shortage occupation lists' and the inclusion of laboratory technicians on this list, enabling salary offer reductions to overseas candidates re. Visa thresholds.	Sustainability	Medium	Durham Technical Professionals Committee HROD	Departmental Managers and HR recruitment teams aware to check all technical recruitment opportunities for eligibility under Shortage Occupations Schemes and to flag candidates which may be eligible under this scheme.	12 months
				5.1.3 The ADR process will be reviewed to ensure its continued suitability for technical staff and that it works alongside and complements the career pathway for Research, Teaching and Technical Professionals. Alongside this we will work to promote the utilisation of existing policies in relation to delivery of ADR and rewards within departments Aligns with objective **1.1**.	Sustainability	Medium	HROD Senior Technical Managers Department Managers HoDs	Revised ADR process launched for staff on Promotional Career Pathway. Review of traditional ADR process undertaken for existing career pathways ensuring its continued relevance to the technical profession.	36 months
				5.1.4 Use NTDC skills data and HR data sets to develop a considered succession planning strategy to ensure the sustainability and growth of core technical skills and specialisms.	Sustainability	Low	Head of Technical Skills Associate PVC (Research Culture) Durham Technical Professionals Committee	Succession planning strategy produced highlighting key specialisms at risk, with particular links to key skills required to underpin the Science Transformation Project.	36 months
5.2 Increase the numbers of technical staff in line with academic and student numbers, with clear visibility of junior career entry points.	Medium	N8 Talent Commission (Commitment 3, 5, 6) University Strategy P2	The University Strategy has committed to increasing and sustaining the number of academic colleagues across Departments. With the ambitions in the Science Transformation Project to realign the student: staff ratios, there is an emerging need to review the number of technical staff supporting academic colleagues in both student-facing and research roles. This review is timely as there is growing awareness and recognition across the sector that the sustainability of the technical profession is facing acute challenges due to an aging workforce and a lack of succession planning. At Durham, this is reinforced by the NTDC survey data that illustrates that: - 45% of Technicians have been at Durham for 10 Years+ - 82% of Technicians have been in the same department since joining - 86% of Technical Staff are 'core' funded by Departments etc. Having a visible and attractive technical career pathway as proposed under action 1.1 will enable us to recruit, train and retain talented staff. By creating visible entry points to the technical career we will increase the numbers of junior technical staff entering the profession. We will consult with colleagues about creating a flexible pool of technical staff who are able to upskill and backfill as roles become available. This will drive the ability of more staff to undertake professional development, training and secondment opportunities and increase the sustainability of the technical profession. This directly supports Durham / N8s commitment to the MI Talent recommendation: 'We will continue to expand entry routes to technical roles and careers within the N8 Research Partnership by encouraging applications from both vocational and academic pathways. We will invest in apprenticeships and trainee technical positions. We will ensure utilisation of the Apprenticeship Levy for training and developing technical colleagues' This objective directly builds on action point 4.1 & 4.2, in our phase one action plan. A selection of technician's response to the 2024 survey relating to staffing / development and areas they feel we should focus on in the phase 2 action plan. "Greater use of development roles in technical positions where staff with suitable a level transferable skills can undertake on the job training providing career development opportunities to staff." "promoting "upskill" opportunities where technicians can spend allotted time in different departments gaining and sharing skills to support CPD and also develop a multi-skilled and flexible technical workforce (improve generalist skills) - mini "secondments" or upskill sessions/programmes" "Develop a career pipeline from T levels through apprenticeships, then on to a "promotional" career pathway" "Investigate cross-institution secondments (e.g. Newcastle, York) Focus on getting departments to encourage it" "The use of apprenticeship-levy funding to support technical career development (to sustain current staff and bring on new staff) has been and will continue to be a significant step towards combatting the upcoming retirement of long-term specialist roles. Looking at T-level opportunities is also significant as it has the potential to not only increase the technical workforce but also offer new opportunities for (potentially local) young people and career changers to enter the technical career pathway."	**5.2.1** Review technical staffing numbers within departments in relation to academic and student growth at Durham, benchmarked to similar institutions.	Sustainability	High	Exec Deans Strategic Technical Advisory Group Department Managers HoDs Senior Technical Managers	Ratios of technical staff to academic / student numbers reviewed and clear plans developed to ensure technical staff numbers are increased in line with academic and student numbers.	12 months
				5.2.2 Enable technical managers to be involved in department planning rounds to ensure the inclusion of apprenticeships roles and technical staff planning where appropriate.	Sustainability Visibility	Medium	Senior Technical Managers Department Managers HoDs	Increased numbers of apprenticeships in key STEM department e.g. 2 every 2 years in Chemistry.	12 months
				5.2.3 Increase the number of T-Level placements hosted in Departments and learn best practice from department that have already undertaken this process.	Sustainability	Medium	Senior Apprenticeships Manager Deputy PVC (Education) Departments HoDs	Increase from 1 department offering placements in 2025 to 3 departments offering T-Level placements by 2027. Technical placements to increase from 2 to 6	24 months
				5.2.4 Look at developing 'Faculty or Cross-Faculty Apprentices' - working across multiple departments potential utilising the 'faculty pool staff / development roles'	Sustainability	Low	Faculty Managers Strategic Technical Advisory Group HROD HoDs Durham Technical Professionals Committee	2 cross faculty apprentices / development roles produced with key interlinked departments (e.g. Earth Science, Archaeology, Geography)	36 months
5.3 Improve our data insights and analysis of our technical workforce, using data to ensure greater visibility of the technical workforce, better understand the requirements for succession planning and to set the groundwork for new technical posts across departments.	Medium	N8 Talent commission (Commitment 4)	The preparation for the NTDC survey facilitated a greater understanding of the structure and make up of our technical workforce. However there is more to be done to identify technical professionals across the University, particularly within central services. Undertaking this will improve our returns to HESA, Athena Swan and REF and provide a more accurate picture of our workforce. This directly supports Durham / N8s commitment to the MI Talent recommendation: 'We will ensure the collection, reporting, tracking and analysis of data on our technical workforces. This might include, for example, submitting technical staff records to HESA' This objective directly builds on action point 3.2 in our phase one action plan. A selection of technician's response to the 2024 survey relating to data insights and succession planning and areas they feel we should focus on in the phase 2 action plan. "Ensure the broadest possible definition of Technical staff, including outside of teaching and research fields"	**5.3.1** Develop clear definitions relating to research, teaching and technical professionals at Durham ensuring inclusive terminology for staff groups such as theatre technicians, Advanced Research Computing, Library and Collections staff etc. These definitions can then be used to ensure consistent data collection and interpretation.	Visibility Sustainability	High	HROD Strategic Technical Advisory Group Faculty Managers PS Team Heads Workforce Planning Durham Technical Professionals Committee	Improved data insights into the technical workforce. More accurate data collection, analysis and evaluation of technical staff and structures.	12 months
				5.3.2 Create PowerBI or equivalent data dashboards with key technical data collected from HR records, HESA returns etc., relating to recruitment / progression / promotion, EDI.	Sustainability	Medium	HR-OD Workforce Planning	Creation of PowerBI (or equivalent dashboard) More inclusive reporting to TC action plan	24 months

6. Enhanced Training

Objectives	Priority	Strategic Alignments	Rationale for Objective and Technician Voice	Specific Actions / Implementations	TC Pillars	Priority	Action Owners	Success Criteria / Outcome	Timeline for Completion
6.1 To provide our technical workforce with the opportunity to attend externally developed bespoke technical development courses. Particularly focusing on training which addresses key EDI issues (such as the numbers of women in technical leadership positions) but also upskilling our technical workforce to deliver the ambitions of the Science Transformation Project.	Medium	N8 Talent Commission (Commitment 6, 9) University Strategy R4.2	Responding to the needs of the technical community, we will improve access to training for both education and research technical professionals and encourage more technical staff to gain professional recognition and accreditation for their work. Through the NTDC survey we have identified that there is a 'trend of underrepresentation of women across the higher grades within the technical workforce'. Working alongside the EDI Unit, We will look to address specific EDI aspects, particularly for women and colleagues from underrepresented groups through increasing the number of staff participating in HeaTed and ITSS programmes – particularly programmes such as the 'Hershal Programme for Women in Technical Leadership' which look to address specific EDI issues within the technical workforce. Aligns with Objective 3.1, Action 3.1.5 This objective directly builds on action point 4.3 in our phase one action plan. A selection of technician's response to the 2024 survey relating to external training and development opportunities and areas they feel we should focus on in the phase 2 action plan. "Continue to support via funding the attendance at external provided 'bespoke' training course for aimed at the technical community"	**6.1.1** Staff supported to apply for ITSS - Knowledge Exchange Placements - UK ITSS using central funding mechanism and peer review process for larger applications	Career Development	Medium	Research Culture Manager TCGS HROD EDI Unit Strategic Technical Advisory Group	Increased numbers of technical staff applying for external training and development opportunities. Feedback gathered through qualitative surveys and reports to the Durham Technical Professionals Committee.	12 months
				6.1.2 Use funding set up in action point **2.3.1** to provide 2-3 funded places on key external training courses provided by ITSS each year with an EOI process for applications e.g. 'Stepping in the technical leadership', 'The Hershel program for women in technical leadership'	Career Development	Medium	Research Culture Manager HROD EDI Unit Durham Technical Professionals Committee Strategic Technical Advisory Group	Conduct an Equality Impact Assessment of our funding streams which is reviewed annually. Monitor uptake from an EDI perspective of colleagues attending programmes and benchmark against progression successes.	24 months
6.2 To provide the technical community with a comprehensive package of training and development opportunities that are accessible and relevant to the technical community.	Medium	N8 Talent Commission (Commitment 1) University Athena Swan Action Plan University Strategy R.3.4	As part of providing fulfilling careers at Durham and maintaining and sustaining our highly skilled workforce, we will identify opportunities to upskill and enhance our training and development offering for technical staff. From the NTDC survey, 87% of technical staff are involved in the training of staff and students and yet 68% have no formal training. Alongside the HROD individual development offering and opportunities available from central services, we will enable technical staff to formally deliver more in house skills based practical training by providing training and qualification opportunities relating to practical skills – for example training-the-trainer delivery, bespoke equipment management and practical laboratory safety. Aligns with Objective 3.1. This objective directly builds on action point 3.3 & 4.3 in our phase one action plan. A selection of technician's response to the 2024 survey relating to internal training and development opportunities and areas they feel we should focus on in the phase 2 action plan. "Make / promote greater use of the apprenticeship levy to bring in support and train younger staff by providing quality in house technical training" "encouraging existing staff to apply for degree apprenticeships to upskill" "Whilst we have used the apprenticeship levy largely to provide training for existing staff members and to fill existing posts, we need to work on a series of new "apprentice technician" posts that can either leverage the talent from the T level placements or seek talented applicants who are not wanting to follow the tradition path to university. These apprentices would help to add resilience to the current workforce and add sustainability to the technical pipeline"	**6.2.1** Widely advertise the opportunities available via the apprenticeships training pathway to both technical staff but also their line managers.	Career Development	Low	Senior Technical Managers Durham Technical Professionals Committee	Increased uptake of existing staff undertaking degree apprenticeships offered via HROD.	36 months
				6.2.2 Review the current uptake of internal training by technical staff and explore new ways (for example, mentoring) to encourage technicians to participate in training and development opportunities.	Career Development	Medium	Head of Technical Skills Durham Technical Professionals Committee HROD DCAD RIS	Clear understanding of numbers of technical staff on internal training courses (e.g. Aspiring Strategic Leaders) with a view to increasing this in key areas such as teaching qualifications, leadership training etc.	12 months
				6.2.3 Increase the numbers of technical staff obtaining training through Durham's learning pathways, particularly on the Professional Recognition Pathway (PRP) and DELTA programmes by widely advertising and encouraging technical staff to engage with these programs - Link with actions **3.1.1, 3.1.4** and **3.1.5**.	Career Development Recognition	Medium	DCAD	10% of technical staff holding HEA accreditation 40% of technical staff with professional registration	24 months
				6.2.4 Ensure that staff / departments are aware of and can make use of the 'fees waiver' arrangement to support staff under taking MRes qualifications at Durham.	Career Development	Medium	Senior Technical Managers	Clear comms on tech SharePoint site and HROD sites about the availability of this option to technical staff.	Ongoing
				6.2.5 Explore opportunities for Durham to deliver degree apprenticeships.	Career Development	Low	Senior Apprenticeship Manager DCAD	Viability of delivering degree apprenticeships in key departments (such as Engineering) explored. Funding opportunities for developing degree apprentices explored	36 months
				6.2.6 Identify key 'hard skills' that Durham technical staff have that they could deliver to the wider technical community (e.g. Hydrofluoric Acid Safety / Laser Safety / Handling Cryogenics) and provide specific training on practical session delivery / train-the-trainer that will empower these staff to deliver this training locally.	Career Development	High	Senior Technical Managers Strategic Technical Advisory Group	Core set of 10 key practical skills identified for in house delivery with train-the-trainer / practical teaching training provided.	12 months
6.3 To explore opportunities for the delivery of external continuing professional development and consultancy both from technical colleagues to industrial partners and vice versa.	Low	N8 Talent Commission (Commitment 6, 9) University Strategy R2.1	The North East Devolution Deal and the North East Skills Improvement Plan presents opportunities for Durham's technical workforce to promote and disseminate cutting-edge technical equipment and skills. Through the Science Transformation Project there are increased opportunities for income diversification via consultancy / facility commercialisation alongside increased training and development routes both for our technical staff and from our technical staff collaborating with industry and sector partners. Our technical staff are uniquely positioned to develop and deliver highly specialist CDP training. Investment in CPD will encourage greater knowledge exchange between Durham and partners and as key regional anchor institution will allow for opportunities for regional collaborations, particular through the NESIP. In the long term, a well-articulated CPD and consultancy offering will bring diversification of income generation and greater collaboration across our departments and faculties as we respond to the needs of the region. This directly supports Durham / N8s commitment to the MI Talent recommendation: 'We will continue to form partnerships with organisations and initiatives that support our technical community.' A selection of technician's response to the 2024 survey relating to CPD and development opportunities and areas they feel we should focus on in the phase 2 action plan. "Continue to promote and expand internal funding and CPD opportunities"	**6.3.1** We will review our existing provision for CPD / consultancy for technical staff.	Career Development	Medium	Strategic Technical Advisory Group RIS - Business Development Departments	Existing CPD mapped across technical community. Clear guidelines produced on the delivery of CPD and consultancy for technical staff and communicated widely.	24 months
				6.3.2 We will identify where we can expand and develop new CPD opportunities that can be offered to industry professionals. In the first instance this will be through direct delivery, but could be incorporated into additional types of teaching and learning courses in the future enhancing impact.	Career Development	Medium	Strategic Technical Advisory Group RIS - Business Development Departments	New opportunities to provide external CPD identified.	24 months
				6.3.3 Develop an industry engagement plan for exchanges between technical communities in Durham and industrial partners to nurture two-way training and development opportunities, with a focus on core practical skills and the acquisition and sharing of specialist technical knowledge.	Career Development	Low	Associate PVCR for Development and Engagement Departments Strategic Technical Advisory Group RIS - Business Development Industry Partners	Plan produced in alignment with the Science Transformation Programme to develop deep industrial partnerships, forming one or more focussed touch points which will facilitate two-way accredited training and secondment activities.	36 months
				6.3.4 Develop partnerships with organisations and initiatives that provide technical and vocational training (e.g. Catapult Centres) to ensure knowledge and skills sharing, facilitate the identification of skills needed for emerging technologies, and to inform the development of suitable future training which responds to the needs of the region e.g. Energy Central Institute initiative in the Port of Blyth.	Career Development	Low	Strategic Technical Advisory Group Associate PVCR for Development and Engagement Departments RIS - Business Development	3 key partner organisations identified and relationships developed.	36 months