

29<sup>th</sup> March 2021

FAO: Lucy Milazzo  
PA to Head of the VCO  
University of Cambridge  
The Old Schools  
Trinity Lane  
Cambridge  
CB2 1TN

## **Re: Technician Commitment – Self-Assessment & Action Plan**

Dear Lucy,

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 Cambridge submission.

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

*The University of Cambridge have a clear understanding of how many technicians they employ (1222), within which units they are located, their grades and which job family (Research, Mechanical and General) they are assigned to.*

*It is commendable that a Technician Agenda Steering Group has been recently established and that it is chaired by a senior member of the University. The broad membership of this steering group, including HR and Personal and Professional Development, clearly ensures that the Technician Agenda, which has a broader remit than the Technician Commitment, penetrates through the whole of the organisation. It is noteworthy that the Technician Agenda Steering Group is in addition to the Technician Commitment Working Group which is also chaired by an equally senior member of the University. It is again commendable that the University has recognised the resources needed to bring the strategic plan to life and have funded a Technician Commitment coordinator to progress these*

*initiatives. Together, these committees and a co-ordinator, provide strong leadership and send a strong message that both the Technician Agenda and the Technician Commitment is important for technicians and the organisation.*

### **The RAG analysis provided:**

*The 2018 Action Plan contained 37 actions covering all the main pillars of the Technician Commitment. The RAG analysis clearly identifies the status of these actions as completed, in progress or uncompleted. It is pleasing to note that Cambridge have completed 30 actions with 3 remaining in progress and that these activities are spread across all five areas of the Technician Commitment.*

*It is clear that the University of Cambridge have worked hard to implement this plan making some notable achievements such as establishing networking events, a technical conference and increased opportunities to increase visibility (such as the posters in Annex 2) and recognition of staff, including encouraging submissions for national awards.*

*Only four actions in the Action Plan remain uncompleted. Three of these (Employer Champion status, coaching, guidance for work experience students) were uncompleted due to lack of resource however the fourth (mentoring) is a university wide scheme and includes all staff groups – this is progressing although perhaps at a slower pace than originally anticipated.*

*The review panel were pleased to see that Cambridge have been very successful in completing almost all of their 2018 Action Plan and reassured that the University was supportive of the Technician Commitment Action Plan. Indeed, the University of Cambridge have established a solid foundation on which to build future activity and engagement.*

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

*The panel was pleased that colleagues of all levels were engaging with the Action Plan and feedback from events had been positive, in particular the new collaborations and the sharing of facilities and expertise. The inaugural technical conference was a great initiative and given the positive feedback and the detailed coverage of this event on their website the reviewers are confident that attendance will increase above 6.5% in future years.*

*Although there is no doubt that the operationalising of the Action Plan is having impact on the visibility and recognition of technicians at the University of Cambridge, the quantitative metrics to evidence this are unfortunately lacking. The panel was pleased to see that Cambridge acknowledge this and aspire to collect this data in the future.*

***Additional initiatives/programmes/activities aligned to the institution's Technician Commitment that is not covered in the original action plan:***

*In addition to the initiatives in the 2018 action plan the University of Cambridge have been active in delivering additional technical focused activities. Indeed, they have used both virtual and in-person initiatives to raise the profile of their technical staff and promote professional registration. We particularly like the posters with diverse staff represented. The panel was especially pleased to note that Cambridge have been working with external organisations like the Sanger Institute and the Royal Society of Chemistry.*

*Although it is not clear how many nominations for national awards were supported by the University of Cambridge, it is great to see that institutional support is in place which will hopefully gather momentum in future years. Equally, recognition of the work which technicians have undertaken throughout the Covid-19 pandemic is welcomed.*

***The Institutions 36-month action plan:***

*The panel was pleased to see that the activities have been planned across the 3 year timespan. The Action Plan has 3 main phases, each mapping to a calendar year, and broken down further into quarters thereby bringing clarity to the plan and ensuring that it is manageable.*

*Overall, the Action Plan targets the key elements of the Technician Commitment. Although many of the actions within the plan have a specific focus, they would benefit from being even more specific, this would make it easier to collect evidence and measure progress and eventually impact. A large percentage of the actions appear to fall to the Technician Commitment Co-ordinator however, it is unclear how much assistance this post holder will receive from others, such as the Working Group, who are not featured in the Action Plan. Wider involvement and participation is actively encouraged.*

*The 36 month Action Plan builds on the solid foundations of the previous Action Plan and it is good to see that it now includes the activities that were done in addition to those in the previous plan. Technical career development and sustainability are often challenging to address and it is commendable to see that the action plan has a range of initiatives in this field. The panel felt that the Action Plan could demonstrate further connectivity to existing institutional initiatives, for example by including technicians in the Research Culture initiatives at the University of Cambridge, which would facilitate the outcomes of the other work streams.*

*Clearly the University of Cambridge are engaging with the Technician Commitment and are taking this initiative forward. The panel looks forward to seeing the University progress its Action Plan over the next 3 years.*

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 the University of Cambridge 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**