

Technician Commitment Action Plan 2026 - 2029



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Introduction

The Earlham Institute is committed to supporting, recognising and developing the technical professionals whose expertise is essential to the delivery of its research, innovation and operational activities. As a signatory to the Technician Commitment (TC), EI seeks to make sustained progress across its core themes of visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability.

This action plan sets out EI's priorities for 2026–2029. It has been informed by staff survey findings, feedback from Professional, Technical and Operational (PTO) colleagues and wider staff consultation, together with relevant recommendations from the TALENT Commission. The evidence indicates that, although many technical colleagues have positive experiences, further action is needed to strengthen the visibility and attribution of technical contributions, clarify career and progression routes, broaden access to development opportunities, improve the support available for grant applications and continue our work on developing technical talent pipelines.

Our 2026–2029 action plan is organised around the four aims of the TC. Visibility and recognition are closely connected and are therefore grouped under the prefix 'VR', while career development actions are labelled 'CD' and sustainability actions 'S'. Each overarching action is numbered, with related sub-actions identified by a letter, for example VR1a–c. The plan also cross-references each sub-action to the relevant TALENT Commission recommendation (TCR) and identifies clear owners, timescales and measurable indicators of success. There are 10 overarching actions with 34 sub-actions in total.

Although actions are grouped under their principal TC aim, many contribute to more than one aim. For example, improving attribution enhances both recognition and visibility, while developing apprenticeships and partnerships supports the long-term sustainability of technical skills alongside career development.

High-priority actions

We have identified VR1, CD1 and S3 as our three highest-priority actions because they address clear evidence of continuing need, support significant and lasting institutional change, and collectively cover all four aims of the Technician Commitment.

VR1: Strengthen recognition and attribution of technical contributions

Ensuring fair and consistent attribution remains a priority despite the considerable progress made during the previous action-plan period. The proportion of publications involving PTO authors has increased since 2023, and survey comments recognise that practice has improved. However, satisfaction with publication attribution remains lower among RTPs (3.8/5) and P&S staff (3.6/5) than among students, postdoctoral researchers and research leaders (4.1/5). Comments also indicate that practice is not yet consistent, particularly regarding involvement in manuscripts and researchers' understanding of their responsibilities. VR1 will embed progress through institutional guidance on authorship, acknowledgement and attribution, informed by the CRediT taxonomy, supported by annual awareness activity and work with PGR leaders and the UEA Graduate School. This will strengthen both the recognition and visibility of technical contributions.

CD1: Develop clear technical career pathways

CD1 is a priority because the need for clearer career pathways emerged particularly strongly from staff consultation. RTPs and P&S staff both scored interest in an EI-specific career development framework at 4.4/5, while wider survey findings identified low levels of satisfaction with the availability, clarity and fairness of progression opportunities. In a small institute, where linear progression within individual teams may be limited, it is especially important that staff can understand how their skills and experience could support movement between roles, grades and career pathways. Developing an all-staff career pathways framework, assessing the ITSS CPAG role-mapping approach and mapping technical roles to example pathways will make progression opportunities more visible and help staff plan their development. It will also support more consistent workforce monitoring and longer-term skills planning.

S3: Develop technical talent pipelines through apprenticeships and partnerships

S3 is a priority because EI needs to protect and diversify routes into technical careers. Since 2023, we have hosted nine T-Level students, providing valuable laboratory experience while enabling RTPs to develop mentoring, leadership and management skills. However, the relevant T-Level programmes offered by our local colleges are being discontinued from 2026/27, creating a risk to this successful vocational entry route. Exploring early-career apprenticeships, mid-career apprenticeships for existing staff and effective use of the Apprenticeship Levy will help EI develop alternative routes into and through technical careers. Collaboration with NBI partners and UEA could make these opportunities more viable for a small institute, while also supporting placements, work shadowing, knowledge exchange and shared technical training. The action therefore contributes to sustainability by developing the future skills pipeline, while also supporting career development and widening access to technical careers.

Each area includes defined actions, responsible owners, delivery timescales and measurable indicators of success. Progress will be overseen through the Institute's Technician Commitment governance arrangements and reviewed during the life of the Plan. This approach will help ensure that the actions remain responsive to staff experience and contribute to a supportive, inclusive and sustainable environment in which technical colleagues can develop and thrive.

VR1: Strengthen Recognition and Attribution of Technical Contributions

Rationale: Survey data and comments indicate that while satisfaction with attribution and acknowledgement is generally high, it is lower than other staff groups and the comments indicate there is more work to be done.

AP Ref	TCR Ref	Sub-action	Owner	Timescale
VR1a	TCR3	Develop and disseminate guidance on authorship, acknowledgement and attribution, drawing on the CRediT taxonomy.	TC Lead / Head of Research Faculty Office	2026-2027
VR1b	TCR3	As part of EI-all meetings, deliver an annual awareness session on attribution and recognition for staff and students.	TC Lead / Head of Research Faculty Office	2026-2029
VR1c	TCR3	Work with EI PGR Director and the University of East Anglia Graduate School Office to ensure that student awareness and compliance with fair attribution guidance is high.	TC Lead / PGR Director/Graduate School Office	2026-2029

Success Measures	Timeline/ Performance Indicator
Guidance developed with RTP input and published on intranet	2027 and Annually
Annual awareness session delivered throughout action plan period	Annually
Student awareness of attribution policy is high	>80%
Improved RTP satisfaction (at least 4.0/5.0) regarding attribution in next staff survey	2028

VR2: Strengthen Visibility and Recognition of Technical Contributions

Rationale: Survey data indicates that RTP staff report lower levels of recognition and visibility than other staff groups despite existing recognition initiatives.

AP Ref	TCR Ref	Sub-action	Owner	Timescale
VR2a	TCR2	Review existing recognition mechanisms with RTP staff and implement agreed improvements.	TC Lead / TCWG/COO	2026-2029
VR2b	TCR6	Maintain an annual technician seminar slot; technical speakers in the EI seminar programme; laboratory/EI open day every 4 years; develop presentation guidance and provide training for seminar speakers.	TC lead/IDEA manager/Seminar Organising Group	2026-2029
VR2c	TCR2	Continue to review data on bonus awards and promotions annually, with more granular analysis by RTP and P&S staff roles if numbers allow, corrective actions agreed if required.	IDEA manager/HR/COO	2026-2029
VR2d	TCR19	Create dedicated TC hub on new EI intranet with links to resources, training and success stories.	TC lead/IDEA manager/Head of Communications	2028-2029

Success Measures	Timeline/ Performance Indicator
Consultation completed and recommendations implemented.	2027
Annual technical seminar delivered; technical staff represented in seminar programme; laboratory/EI open day delivered.	Seminars 2026 – 2029 Open day 2027
Annual review of official recognition data with corrective action agreed with senior management if necessary.	Annual
Dedicated TC hub established on new EI intranet that staff are aware of and find useful (as measured by survey data).	>70% awareness >=3.5/5.0 for usefulness of hub (2029)

CD1: Develop Clear Technical Career Pathways

Rationale: Survey data show strong demand for clearer career pathways and development information.

AP Ref	TCR Ref	Sub-action	Owner	Timescale
CD1a	TCR2 & 17	Develop and promote a PTO career pathways framework.	Director	2027 and annual
CD1b	TCR17	Assess applicability of the resources issued by the Institute of Technical Skills Strategy (ITSS) Career Pathway Action Group (CPAG) role mapping framework when drafting EI Career Framework	HR / TC Lead	2027
CD1c	TCR17	Map technical roles to example career pathways.	HR / TC Lead	2028

Success Measures	Timeline/ Performance Indicator
Career pathways framework developed with PTO consultation and implemented.	2027
Annual promotion of framework.	Annual
Review of the CPAG resources as part of the EI PTO Career Pathways Framework drafting, with an analysis against good practice, as part of the staff consultation on EI's draft career framework.	2027
EI technical roles mapped to example career pathways.	2028
Career pathways framework developed with PTO consultation and implemented.	2027

CD2: Expand Mentoring, Secondment and Work Shadowing Opportunities

Rationale: Staff consultation identified strong interest in mentoring, work shadowing/secondments and broader career development opportunities.

AP Ref	TCR Ref	Sub-action	Owner	Timescale
CD2a	TCR15	Develop and promote a formal process to facilitate secondment opportunities for PTO staff.	IDEA Manager/COO	2027
CD2b	TCR15	Develop work-shadowing opportunities for PTO internally and with partner organisations	TC Lead/IDEA Manager	2028
CD2c	TCR15	Raise awareness of cross-Norwich Bioscience Institutes' (NBIs') mentoring and coaching scheme (via EI-all emails, the TC intranet hub and EI-all presentations) and ensure sufficient PTO role types are catered for in mentor pool.	IDEA Manager/NBI Training & Development Manager	2027
CD2d	TCR15	Advertise promptly the opportunity to be involved with ITSS Cross-Institute Mentoring scheme annually,	TC Lead	2026-2029

Success Measures	Timeline/ Performance Indicator
New Systems developed to facilitate secondment opportunities for PTO staff.	2027
Work-shadowing/secondment process documented and promoted.	2027
Cross NBI mentoring scheme and ITSS mentoring scheme promoted annually.	Annual
At least one EI RTP and P&S staff mentor available annually	Annual
Participation in shadowing/secondment monitored annually	Annual
At least one new shadowing opportunity established	2028

CD3: Improve Grant Development Support for Technical Staff

Rationale: PTO staff report lower satisfaction with grant training and post-application support.

AP Ref	TCR Ref	Sub-action	Owner	Timescale
CD3a	TCR4 TCR5	Create and promote an intranet page on the available grant application support resources including a guidance document on budgets and costings, and a list of successful grant holders willing to offer advice.	Head of Research Faculty Office/NBIP contracts office	2027
CD3b	TCR5	Conduct a PTO focus group on grant support needs.	Head of Research Faculty Office	2027
CD3c	TCR5	Pilot flash mentoring for grant applicants.	Head of Research Faculty Office	2028
CD3d	TCR5	Introduce grant debrief opportunities following unsuccessful applications.	Head of Research Faculty Office	2029

Success Measures	Timeline/ Performance Indicator
Intranet page(s) created on the support resources for grant applications, including costings guidance and list of successful fellowship/grant holder.	2027
PTO Focus group completed and recommendations reviewed and implemented.	2027
At least one grant application flash mentoring event run.	2027
Grant debrief opportunities offered.	2027-2029

CD4: Improve Transparency of Promotion and Progression Processes

Rationale: Survey scores relating to promotion transparency and access to information are low across all staff groups.

AP Ref	TCR Ref	Sub-action	Owner	Timescale
CD4a	TCR2	Raise awareness of promotion and bonus award guidance (via EI-all emails, the TC intranet hub and HR-led EI-all presentations)	HR	2026-2029
CD4b	TCR2	Deliver biennial promotion information sessions as part of EI-all	HR	2026-2029
CD4c	TCR2	Provide PTO managers with guidance on supporting promotion and bonus applications.	HR/IDEA Manager	2026-2029

Success Measures	Timeline/ Performance Indicator
Promotion and bonus award guidance highlighted annually by email and EI-All meetings.	2027-2029
Biennial information sessions delivered at EI-All.	Biennial, 2027 & 2029
Guidance on supporting promotion and bonus applications for PTO managers published and disseminated.	2027
Improved survey scores relating to promotion, at least 3.5/5.0 for PTO staff.	2029

CD5: Implement a Training and Development Policy

Rationale: EI has a strong culture of development but until recently lacked a formal policy setting expectations and entitlements. Professional registration remains low within EI.

AP Ref	TCR Ref	Sub-action	Owner	Timescale
CD5a	TCR15	Promote new EI Training and Development Policy, which includes information on funding professional registration and training allowance.	TC Lead/COO	2026-2027
CD5b	TCR15	Promote training funds and development opportunities.	TC Lead	2026-2027
CD5c	TCR15	Run session on Continual Professional Development (CPD) and Personal Development (PD) Plans focusing on PTO Staff.	TC Lead/NBI Training & Development Manager	2028

Success Measures	Timeline/ Performance Indicator
EI Training and Development Policy promoted and available on intranet.	2026
Regular emails on relevant training circulated along with information on training fund.	2026-2029
Awareness of Training and Development policy is high.	>70% awareness in survey).
At least one event on the value of CPD and PD plans is run.	2027-2029
Improved PTO staff satisfaction with development opportunities.	=> 4.0/5.0 for RTPs and P&S staff (2029)

S1: Monitor the Technical Workforce and Inform Future Priorities

Rationale: Workforce data are required to understand the composition of the technical community and inform action planning.

AP Ref	TCR Ref	Sub-action	Owner	Timescale
S1a	TCR7	Produce an annual technical workforce profile.	HR / TC Lead	Annual
S1b	TCR7	Review workforce trends and report findings.	HR / TC Working Group	Annual
S1c	TCR7	Continue to include role questions in our surveys.	IDEA Manager	Biennial

Success Measures	Timeline/ Performance Indicator
Annual workforce profile produced.	Annual
Findings reviewed by TC Working Group and shared with Executive Team including recommendations in areas for development	Annual
Survey data analysed by role cohort and data used to inform future actions.	Biennial

S2: Strengthen Succession Planning and Skills Sustainability

Rationale: Documented succession planning and a formal documented exit process will support continuity of technical expertise and institutional resilience.

AP Ref	TCR Ref	Sub-action	Owner	Timescale
S2a	TCR9	Develop succession planning discussions into formal recorded plans.	COO/HR	2026
S2b	TCR9	Raise awareness amongst managers of succession planning and skill sustainability needs.	IDEA Manager	2026
S2c	TCR9	Review future skills needs annually including PTO managers.	SHRC	2026-2028
S2d	TCR9	Develop formal documented exit process beyond those provided by HR.	Operational and Laboratory Manager	2026

Success Measures	Timeline/ Performance Indicator
Succession planning process documented and circulated to managers.	2026
Annual review of skills gaps completed and areas of concern flagged to relevant managers with remedial action taken if necessary.	Annual
Formal exit process developed and used.	Developed 2026 Used from 2027

S3: Develop Technical Talent Pipelines through Apprenticeships and Partnerships

Rationale: Apprenticeships and external partnerships can support both future and existing technical staff.

AP Ref	TCR Ref	Sub-action	Owner	Timescale
S3a	TCR 12 & 13	Review opportunities to utilise apprenticeship routes.	HR / TC Lead/IDEA Manager	2026-2029
S3b	TCR 12 & 13	Explore opportunities for existing staff to access mid-career apprenticeships.	HR / TC Lead/IDEA Manager	2026-2029
S3c	TCR 12 & 13 & 20	Work with NBI partners and UEA on collaborative development opportunities for PTO staff.	IDEA Manager / TC Lead	2026-2029

Success Measures	Timeline/ Performance Indicator
Apprenticeship scoping exercise completed.	2027
Apprenticeship recommendations agreed and implemented.	2028
At least one pilot apprenticeship or collaborative placement opportunity identified.	2029
NBI and UEA discussions initiated and cross-institute activities established.	2029