

### John Innes Centre Technicians Commitment ambitions - 36-month Action Plan: Jan 2024 to Dec 2026

The John Innes Centre (JIC) was a founding signatory of the Technician Commitment in 2017 and is committed to addressing the key challenges faced by technical staff. As a signatory, we commit to promoting greater visibility (V), recognition (R), career development (C) and sustainability (S) for all our technical staff.

Our new action plan aligns with the pillars of the technician commitment, and many activities from our previous two action plans are now embedded in our business-as-usual activities. This action plan has focussed on the more challenging aspects to follow up on from our previous action plan, and it includes some key initiatives planned for the JIC over the coming years where technical staff can contribute to and drive a culture change at the institute.

#### Responsible people / groups

Technician Commitment Lead - TCL	Technician Commitment Steering Group - TCSG	Human Resources - HR
JIC Communications Team - Comms	Research and Support Staff Voice - RSSV	JIC Directorate – DIR
EDI committee - EDI	Learning and Development Lead - LD	Head of Strategic Engagement - SE

Objective/Actions	Theme	Responsibility	Measures of Success
<b>1. Refresh the organisation and management of the Technician Commitment at JIC</b>			
<b>Rationale:</b> The JIC has been a signatory of the Technician Commitment since 2017. Many aspects are embedded, as evidenced in our 2021-2023 action plan. With a new Director in 2022 and the previous Technician Commitment Lead moving to senior management in the same year, the launch of the 2024-26 action plan was seen as an excellent time to include an action reviewing the resources and responsibilities for the Technician Commitment and how technical staff contribute. Through this, we can ensure the new actions can be developed and reported on and that we encourage a bigger cohort of technical staff to take on responsibility for these actions, increasing awareness of initiatives and recognition for their input.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Implement outcomes of EDI review (completed in Dec 2023) to include setting up of the new EDI committee and ensuring that EDI is integrated within the rest of our research culture work (yr1).</li></ul>	R/V/S	DIR/EDI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A new EDI committee is established, including representation from Research and Support Staff (RSS).</li></ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effectively communicate the new JIC Committee structure so that technical staff can clearly see how they can contribute to decision making at the JIC.</li> </ul>	V	Comms/DIR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Committee structure and access routes are clearly communicated to ensure technical staff understand how to contribute.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refresh how the Technician Commitment and Research and Support Staff Voice (RSSV) activities are joined up. Appoint a new Technician Commitment lead (yr1) and review the delivery of the TC at JIC, ensuring alignment with the Technician Commitment Steering Group and RSSV. Use this approach to increase shared responsibility and engage a wider range of technical staff (Yr1).</li> </ul>	R/V/S	RSS/DIR/TCL/TCSG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A new TC lead appointed, with a system in place for future succession planning.</li> <li>Specific RSS champions appointed for each of our initiatives, ensuring a wider range of staff take responsibility for our TC actions.</li> <li>During appraisal time with line managers, time in supporting the Technicians Commitment is discussed and recognised.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New templates put in place for RSSV annual reporting and budget requests with opportunity to bid for additional resources (yr1-3).</li> </ul>	V/S	DIR/RSS/TCL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An annual report to management will be provided by RSSV and the TC lead , highlighting key impacts.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Twice yearly formal meeting of RSS voice (which includes the TCL) with Director (yr1-3).</li> </ul>	R/V	DIR/RSS/TCL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two meetings/year held between RSSV and the Director. Regular informal contact with DIR.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Embedding RSS into JIC's research culture and business change initiatives associated with the Next Generation Infrastructure (NGI) and accompanying Healthy Plants, Healthy People, Healthy Planets (HP3) vision.</b>			
<b>Rationale:</b> With significant investment (approx £400m) secured for JIC and TSL to establish a new plant and microbial science hub on-site, there are massive changes underway at the institute. A new building is scheduled for delivery by 2030, and it will profoundly impact how our business and vision are delivered. This objective reflects the integral involvement of technical staff in all stages of this development, shaping the culture and opportunities for technical staff at JIC.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Technical staff will play a key part in the stakeholder engagement for NGI by participating in various working groups that will contribute to the construction design (Yr1-3).</li> </ul>	R/V/S	NGI/RSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All RSS are invited to JIC-ALL design update meetings, encouraged to ask questions, and provide feedback on proposals.</li> <li>At least 10 members of RSS will participate in NGI design working groups, taking the lead on</li> </ul>

			engagement themes where appropriate, and bringing their specialist knowledge and insight.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RSS will act as ambassadors for the HP3 vision (Yr1-3).</li> </ul>	R/V	SE/NGI/RSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least five RSS to be assigned as HP3 Ambassadors</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statistics will be collected for the business change workstream, and through this the impact of the NGI/HP3 on research culture will be assessed (Yr1-3).</li> </ul>	V/S	NGI/SE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The impact of the NGI project on RSS and research culture will be assessed, and key impacts recorded as part of the wider business change initiatives.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Career Development opportunities for technical staff</b>			
<p><b>Rationale:</b> All our technical staff undergo annual appraisals and are eligible for consideration for performance related pay, special bonuses, and promotion. A wide range of compulsory and optional training courses, including soft skills training and technical courses, are available. While many of these initiatives are embedded as good practice, this section highlights additional efforts to address areas raised by technical staff.</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To increase awareness and recognition that technical staff are eligible to participate in funding panels. Encourage technical staff to seize these opportunities and share their experience (Yr1-3).</li> </ul>	R/V/C	Comms/DIR/RSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regularly share opportunities and calls for panel participation.</li> <li>Feature technical staff involved in grant writing and panel membership in blogs by the communications team.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will meet our obligations as 'Employer Champions' with the Science Council and continue to regularly communicate the opportunity for technical staff to become professionally registered. Highlight a technician to champion this initiative in yr2.</li> <li>Maintain a system and budget enabling Technicians who become registered to claim their expenses back (Yr1-3).</li> <li>Previously successful registrants will be encouraged to support and mentors those wishing to become registered (Yr1-3).</li> </ul>	R/C	RSS/TCL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The number of staff professionally registered will be monitored yearly and awareness of benefits is increased through regular communications and training.</li> <li>The take up of mentoring by staff is monitored and increases.</li> <li>Attendance and feedback from cross institute workshops are recorded, aiming for at least 50 participants over the life of the action plan.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organise a cross-institute (Norwich Research Park) workshop to promote the merits of Professional Registration (Yr2).</li> <li>Conduct a skills workshop following on from above event to guide applicants through the competencies application procedure (Yr3).</li> <li>Where appropriate, include professional registration as a desirable on job adverts (Yr1-3).</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>JIC already has an established coaching and mentoring pool, which has recently expanded to allow access to mentoring at Quadram and Earlham institutes. Improve awareness of this among RSS and highlight benefits of coaching and mentoring through various communications (Yr1-3).</li> <li>Promote the new Alumni network mentoring scheme and regular alumni lunchtime seminar series (Yr1-3).</li> </ul>	C	Comms/TCL/RSS/LD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Newsletter article highlighting the benefits of coaching and mentoring published, information made available on digital notice boards across site. These digital notice boards are updated monthly.</li> <li>Increase the use of the mentoring pool among RSS.</li> <li>At least 3 alumni sessions held over the three-year period.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and implement career development framework illustrating common roles and possible career paths within and beyond the John Innes Centre. It can be used to support career development discussions, helping to identify possible next steps and longer-term career aspirations. The framework will include indications of responsibilities and expectations for someone performing well at each career stage, aiding understanding of what might be expected for a particular career path and what might be required to progress (Yr2)</li> <li>Promote visibility of roles and career pathways using the JIC 'Introducing' articles (Yr1-3).</li> <li>Review provision of information on existing reward systems, i.e., promotion, pay awards and special bonuses (Yr1-3).</li> </ul>	C  C  C	HR  Comms/RSS  HR/DIR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The career development framework is made openly available on our intranet.</li> <li>At least two RSS 'introducing' articles per year published.</li> <li>Continue to monitor the application of awards.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the retention and progression of RSS into leadership positions by promoting and supporting involvement with MI Talent and other leadership programmes (Yr1-3).</li> <li>Ensure all grades of staff have access to new training opportunities where appropriate. Historically, lab support, for example, have not always had time made available for such development opportunities due to lack of cover (Yr1-3).</li> </ul>	C/V/R/S  C/S	RSS/TCL/DIR/LD  TCL/DIR/Line managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upcoming training opportunities promoted through RSS champions via RRSV newsletters.</li> <li>Staff survey questions monitored.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Visibility – Continue to ensure our technical staff are visible internally and externally.</b>			
<b>Rationale:</b> Ensure visibility and recognition of our staff and the roles they play internally and ensure RSS seize opportunities for external visibility to enhance their profile.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage staff to update their internal profile on the intranet, including their job details and expertise (Yr1-3).</li> <li>Work with communications to ensure all technical staff are aware of the opportunity to have an external profile (on the JIC website and/or LinkedIn). This will be promoted through regular targeted communication in internal newsletters. We will also include it as a standard feature in the RSSV (Yr2-3).</li> </ul>	V/R/C	Comms/RSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yearly reminders sent to update internal profile.</li> <li>Aim for at least 80% of technical staff to have an external profile on the JIC website by yr2.</li> <li>Merits of external /internal profiles promoted yearly.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to ensure that technical staff are included in internal and external news articles and blogs (Yr1-3).</li> </ul>	V/R	Comms/RSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will post a minimum of five news or blog articles per year raising visibility and celebrate the work of RSS staff.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote better use of the RSS/'X' social media account, feature regular 'RSS take over' days/weeks (Yr1-3).</li> </ul>	V/R	RSS/TCL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feature a minimum of two RSS Twitter 'take overs' per year.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote RSS involvement in general site visits, work experience, and outreach activities (Yr1-3).</li> </ul>	V/R/C	RSS/Comms/SE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RSS involvement monitored and highlighted in newsletters</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Technicians will contribute to the development of the new JIC values by joining focus groups (yr1-2).</li> </ul>	V/R	HR/RSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>JIC values made available on the intranet and communicated.</li> </ul>
<b>5. Recognition – Ensure our technical staff are recognised by a variety of routes</b>			
<b>Rationale:</b> Ensure all technical staff are recognised for their contributions to JIC.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publicise the new awards page on the intranet and ensure any new technical awards are included. Work to raise awareness and encourage management to nominate technical staff for awards. Encourage sharing of successful award nominations to improve nomination quality (Yr1-3).</li> </ul>	V/R	DIR/Comms/RSS/TCL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Record all successful award nominations yearly.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An RSS Awards champion will be appointed in Yr1 to identify potential awards and deadlines and to actively recommend staff for awards through discussion with management.</li> </ul>	R	DIR/Comms/RSS/TCL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awards Champion appointed.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that Honorary Appointments at UEA are open to technical staff, and the procedure communicated annually. Provide guidance on applying for Honorary positions (Yr2-3).</li> </ul>	R/C	DIR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report number of RSS with honorary positions yearly</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase the visibility of staff with Honorary Appointments to encourage more staff to apply. Utilise the staff newsletter to promote the visibility of new appointments, promotions, and teaching commitments of our RSS (Yr1-3).</li> </ul>	V/R	Comms/DIR/RSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Write a news article on honorary appointments to raise awareness (yr1)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regularly communicate the JIC online recognition card and monitor usage yearly (yr1-3).</li> </ul>	R	DIR/COMMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness of recognition cards increased, and yearly usage monitored.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communication of the Authorship guidelines through the Responsible Research Conduct Committee (RRCC) and ensure that staff are being credited appropriately and have confidence to raise any concerns.</li> </ul>	R	RSS/COMMS/DIR/TCL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase awareness of the guidelines with the RSSV annually.</li> <li>Any concerns will be followed up by the RRCC</li> </ul>
<b>6. Collaboration - Engaging with local and National initiatives.</b>			
<b>Rationale:</b> We will collaborate with other TC Institute signatories to deliver joint events, share ideas, and raise awareness of opportunities. With four Technician Commitment signatories based in Norwich (JIC, Earlham, The Sainsbury Lab and UEA), and JIC being a founding member of the Research Institute Technician Commitment Group, there are many opportunities to share resources and best practice.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with the other institutes at the Norwich Research Park (NRP) to secure funding to support the annual accessible science event. Implement segmented recording of the event to enable identification and sharing of individual talks, supporting the raising of staff profiles and increasing the impact of the event (Yr1-3).</li> </ul>	V/C	RSS/TCL/EDI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The NBI Accessible Science Event is run annually as a joint institute event led by JIC and with funding secured from QIB/EI and TSL.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver and support other joint NRP technician events, including training opportunities, sharing of best practice, seminars, and social interactions (Yr1-3).</li> </ul>	V/C	RSS/TCL/EDI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cross-institute opportunities encouraged and attendance by JIC RSS staff recorded.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet regularly online with RITG TCL's to share in best practice and organise the 2025 RITG Symposium and RITAs.</li> </ul>	V/C	RSS/TCL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 8 online meetings per year held</li> <li>RITG symposium delivered in 2025 and at least 10 JIC RSS to attend.</li> <li>RSS nominations for the 2025 RITAs encouraged.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure our technical staff receive updates on opportunities from the Institute of Technical Support in Science (ITSS). Share and promote the newsletter and opportunities.</li> <li>Encourage Platform Managers to join the UK Technology Specialists Network (TSN).</li> </ul>	C	Comms/RSS/DIR/TCL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor how many staff engage with ITSS initiatives yearly.</li> <li>At least two Platform managers join TSN and JIC is represented at the conference.</li> </ul>

7. Strategic Engagement and Policy			
<b>Rationale:</b> To ensure the involvement of all staff in strategic engagement and policy work. The Technician perspective is valuable, and we want to ensure it is heard, providing these staff members with opportunities and confidence to contribute.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will run a new workshop for technical staff on how they can contribute to science policy (Yr2-3).</li> </ul>	C/R/V	SE/RSS/DIR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A least one policy workshop will be run by 2027, and will be attended by at least 10 members of RSSV.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will promote relevant policy opportunities to technical staff via the RSSV newsletter and the JIC newsletter. Examples include the Royal Society Policy Pairing scheme, FTMA placements, Evidence Week, SET for Britain, and internal and external policy events (Yr1-3).</li> </ul>	C/R/V	SE/RSS/DIR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least three policy engagement opportunities will be shared each year, and applications from technical staff monitored.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will ensure there are opportunities for technical staff to take part in policy maker visits to the JIC by participating in tours, roundtables, and meetings (Yr1-3).</li> </ul>	V/C/R	SE/RSS/DIR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least four members of RSSV staff will engage with policy makers during JIC organised activities each year.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will promote relevant opportunities to join advisory committees to technical staff via the RSSV (Yr1-3).</li> </ul>	V/C/R	SE/RSS/DIR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of staff on advisory committees will be recorded.</li> </ul>
8. Sustainability - Ensure the future sustainability of technical roles through succession planning and inspiring the next generation of technicians.			
<b>Rationale:</b> Ensuring the sustainability of technical roles and inspiring the next generation of technicians is crucial for driving innovation, economic development, addressing skills shortages and promoting diversity and inclusion in technical roles.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and plan for succession in key technical staff retirements, with additional recruitment identified where appropriate for a smooth handover period (Yr1-3).</li> <li>Identify key training requirements for technical staff through the Technology Platform Oversight Committee.</li> </ul>	S	DIR/RSS  RSS/LD/TPOC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Platforms regularly reviewed, and key posts and skills identified yearly.</li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The recent admin review (2023) mapped the responsibilities and skills of our admin staff (RSS). A new structure has been put in place in 2023 to encourage team working and automation of processes. The progress on the recommendations will be monitored (yr1).</li> </ul>	S	DIR/RSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor turnover of admin staff and job satisfaction and support.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accessible Science talks will be made available to an increased number of schools as a resource, building on the success of the 2023 event (Yr1-3).</li> </ul>	S	RSS/Comms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The use of the accessible science resources by schools and universities increases.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RSS to support Yr8 Find My Future event, and Yr10 summer camp (Yr1-3)</li> </ul>	S	RSS/Comms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of RSS participating will be monitored, with a target of at least 5 RSS to participate each year.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Easton College intern scheme will be supported by RSS staff in horticultural services. Two interns will be hosted in yr1 and future involvement determined following evaluation.</li> </ul>	S	RSS/Comms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An article promoting the impact of the scheme will be written.</li> </ul>