



The UK Technicians Survey 2009:

A dip into the results...

“It’s like a nation-wide appraisal”



This summer saw the launch of the largest ever co-ordinated survey of staff working in Higher Education. Built on the success of an earlier survey of staff views back in 2003, HEaTED 2009 asked technicians what it is like to work in UK HE right now. An amazing 3555 colleagues gave their opinions from 110 different organisations across the UK.

Professor Keith Burnett the chair of the HEaTED Steering Group and Vice Chancellor of the University of Sheffield was very excited about the prospect of developing a national training and career development agenda based on what technicians want and need. “An outstanding response from colleagues across UK Higher Education. It is clear there is room for significant improvement. For the first time we can develop training solutions based on a single national opinion in order to target resources most effectively”.

Not only does the HEaTED survey offer a national picture, it also allows each of the 110 Universities taking part to see just what their own staff think and compare this to the sector as a whole.

“Fantastic idea but do you really think you are going to change anything?”

HEaTED is a national training and career development framework for the UK Higher Education sector.

Our vision is to deliver tools and opportunities that not only meet the training and career development needs of technical staff, but also fit into the requirements of an ever changing HE sector – find out more at heated.ac.uk

Achieved already...



Professional accreditation by the Institute of Science & Technology

An annual 'showcase' UK conference

A technical specialists networking mailbase

Two national surveys of the UK's 30,000 technical staff to find out what they really think, completed by over 6000 staff

A short course UK wide training series

A central team committed to delivering the up to date services you need

Regional collaborative events in partnership with LFHE

A growing corporate membership of over 50 Universities so far

A growing presence and 'voice' at major UK HE events

Funding to help the sustainability of the HEaTED agenda

Some of our 52 members

ROYAL VETERINARY COLLEGE, LONDON
Cranfield University OXFORD Leicester

Nottingham Trent Northumbria

Royal Holloway, University of London

BRISTOL

YORK UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, LONDON

Worcester University

ROEHAMPTON UNIVERSITY

Glasgow Caledonian Liverpool

IMPERIAL COLLEGE

STRATHCLYDE

BATH

Anglia Ruskin University

NEWMAN COLLEGE OF HE

Bradford

DUNDEE

Keele Newport, University of Wales College
ABERDEEN Sheffield Surrey **KENT**
Plymouth Durham Southampton
University of the Arts London **Manchester**
Leeds ST GEORGES, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
Bangor **Staffordshire University**
QUEENS UNIVERSITY BELFAST **KINGSTON** Cardiff
UWIC Harper-Adams University **BATH**
ST ANDREWS **Napier University**

DOING WELL

- Staff review and appraisal process
- Workload and work-life balance
- Engagement and satisfaction
- Autonomy and trust
- Motivation
- Diversity (aspects of)

ROOM FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Work accountability
- Pay and grading systems
- New staff induction
- Communication and consultation
- Training and career development
- Diversity (aspects of)

In many ways technical staff in higher education today are a motivated and content group of people. They are generally engaged in their work which provides them with a real sense of satisfaction. Levels of work-life balance satisfaction are high and most feel that their contribution is valued, good work is acknowledged, and people are treated with dignity and respect.

There are however, a number of areas in which the sector could do better, further engage staff and realise the benefits that more effective management of this vital staff group can provide.

Opinions between 2006 and 2009 do not appear to have changed significantly, apart from a more acute concentration on the needs of individuals rather than the technical

“HEaTED results for Bristol allow us to see how we are doing and set corporate development priorities for our technical staff”

**Christian Carter, Organisational Development Manager
(Staff Development) University of Bristol**

community as a whole. There is a sense of more career ‘competition’, perhaps brought about by the current economic climate. Technical staff are less willing to help others through training and coaching. Significant numbers request training that is particularly linked to career development opportunities.

The numbers of women entering and staying in the profession is increasing, suggesting that the needs of women, particularly around flexible working

and childcare need to be given more attention than in the past by employers. A reliance on the use of fixed term contracts still appears to be high in many parts of the sector.

The quality of line management is, perhaps surprisingly for some, viewed as generally good by most technical staff, and especially in the older research led institutions. However, there is much confusion over who in fact is the ‘manager’. Many technicians receive

“46% not clear about training”

work from over ten different sources, a minority of this coming from their manager. Guidance on work priorities or quality is lacking and there is a sense that many are often left to get on with the job as they see fit. Many are left to drift without any task or indeed career guidance.

Communication could be improved with high numbers not identifying with a particular ‘team’ or seeing how their work contributes to any University objectives.

Improvements are needed in communication and consultation and may be partly responsible for

the feeling amongst nearly half of respondents that pay and grading systems are not fair. This is a poor outcome, particularly following the very large pay and grading exercises that has just been completed across the UK. It is clear that significant improvements have been made in this area recently; why are these not be understood by many technical staff.

“survive and get out as soon as I can afford to before it gets any worse”

Training is seen as very important to technical staff but around half do not think their ‘employer’ views it as such. The induction of new staff is not

widespread enough but where it does take place feedback is very positive. Virtually all would like to see a national co-ordinated approach to development for technical staff. Most want to work towards national qualifications but are unsure how to do this. High numbers are simply unsure about how their job fits into a wider career and as a result too many are thinking about leaving higher education.

Staff review and appraisal processes are widespread and viewed very well by technical staff across the sector. The process is useful not only in areas such as the identification of training needs, but also for highlighting and solving work based problems.

Technical staff have a significant impact on student learning, not only in post-92



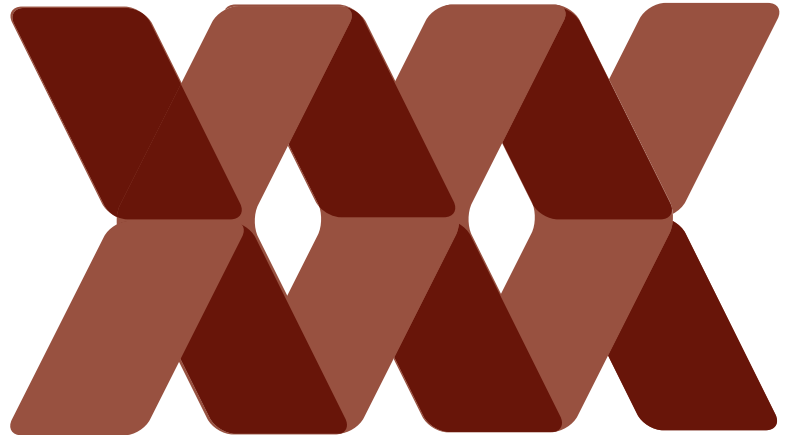
“92% think a UK Technicians web site would be useful”

universities, but also in more research led institutions. This input is by no means restricted to ‘helping’ in environments such as laboratories. Large numbers of technical staff prepare group work, design parts of courses and teach, sometimes to very large groups of students.

Technical staff are, on balance, a fairly content group of staff. They are engaged and motivated in their work and are treated well by their employers and managers. Some of the more fundamental elements of good ‘human

resources’ practice such as quality staff communication and consultation, staff development linked to real career opportunities and more flexible working practices, would add even more value to the already crucial contribution they make to research and teaching across the UK.

“An insightful survey which made me think more about my position and career path”



Next steps...

Targeted and prioritised development can now take place at both a national and local level for technical staff.

UK developments will be promoted and featured on the HEaTED web site.

If you would like specific or further information please contact the

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FURTHER INFORMATION...

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