Working with Higher Education to set the standards for professional scientists
Technicians are vital to the success of the UK’s universities and research institutes.

They underpin the key activities of their organisations, providing the technical expertise essential to research, teaching and knowledge transfer. Alongside this, many technicians are researchers and teachers in their own right. Despite the importance of technicians, traditionally their role has not been well recognised and their career and professional development can often be overlooked.

The Science Council has been working to increase the recognition for technicians and to improve their professional development opportunities at all career stages. Registered Science Technician (RSciTech), Registered Scientist (RSci) and Chartered Scientist (CSci) recognise people in technical science roles with different degrees of responsibility, knowledge and skill.

**CASE STUDY: NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY**

Newcastle University is very proud of the quality of their research and teaching. According to their Vice-Chancellor, Professor Chris Brink, for this to succeed, “There must be a strong cohort of technicians.” Mel Leitch, Technical Manager for the Institute of Neuroscience, immediately recognised the potential for professional registration to inspire not only his team, but all technical staff in the university.

“Newcastle University as an employer is very committed to encouraging career development, and since our technicians make such a crucial contribution to the core research and teaching of the University, we felt the Science Council’s programme was tailor-made for us to meet this commitment.”

Working with the Science Council, Mel has organised workshops, registration days, and encouraged those in his team that are already registered to act as mentors for anyone going through the application process.

“Recognition is something that we’ve been struggling with as a group of workers within Higher Education and professional registration has been a vehicle for giving us this recognition,” says Mel. “Those technicians that have become professionally registered have become super motivated. They come to me with solutions, not problems; they come with initiatives that they want to drive forward. Having that empowerment is really impressive.”

Watch the video at sciencecouncil.org/newcastle

It is unimaginable that we could deliver what we do without a really well qualified and motivated technical staff.

Professor Sir David Greenaway, Vice-Chancellor University of Nottingham, Chair of the Russell Group
A year in industry can be hugely valuable for students, not simply as a separate event, but as an integral part of their academic experience and their professional development.

In 2015 the University of Nottingham introduced the Science Council to their Food Sciences placement students to learn how their experiences might align with the competences for the Registered Scientist award. Students were very keen to gain recognition as professional scientists in time for graduation and subsequent employment.

The students all said the process of aligning their placement year experiences to national standards made them reflect on what they had achieved and areas for future development. Dr Judith Wayte, who leads the university’s placements programme is pleased with the opportunities this has provided: “Through discussions with employers, we now have a way of sharing good practice with new placement providers.”

In December of that year the first group of students were assessed for the Registered Scientist award and a celebratory event was held for all those who were successful. The university is now expanding the scheme across their Year in Industry programmes.

CASE STUDY: THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM

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The Science Council brings together a wide range of disciplines and sectors, through our member organisations and employer champions, for collaboration and campaigning.

The Science Council provides a voice on policy issues affecting the science community, fostering debate and the exchange of ideas. Becoming an Employer Champion provides exclusive access to these forums and other opportunities to influence the conversation.

Most recently, the Science Council has been represented on The Wakeham Review of STEM degree provision and graduate employability. As a result, we are leading on the development of a broader system of accreditation to ensure that graduates have the core skill set required of a STEM graduate.

The Science Council also regularly contributes to a wide range of policy consultations from Government, Parliament and stakeholders across the science community and beyond, including access to postgraduate study, apprenticeships and funding for science research.

Encouraging Pfizer placement students to apply for RSci helps them recognise everything they have achieved in their year in industry. Recognising their vocational experience gives them the edge over new graduates and Pfizer is proud to support that.

Kate Barclay; Director, Pfizer Ltd

The Science Council really helped us to get the message across to politicians and their advisors on the importance of science and scientific skills to the UK’s economy.

Polly L Arnold, Crum Brown Chair - Chemistry, Edinburgh University

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Supporting your organisation

The Science Council recognises organisations that encourage professional registration of their staff and invest in their development through our Employer Champion programme.

All our Employer Champions have set out their commitment to quality and ethical standards for their employees, students and their organisation as a whole. In return we provide dedicated support from our staff team, along with tools and resources that promote professional practice within their organisation.

CASE STUDY: UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

Members of the University of Exeter’s Technical Services team attended the University Bioscience Manager’s association conference in Nottingham in April 2015, where they heard about the Science Council Employer Champion programme. “After the conference we went onto the website to find out more and got in touch with the Employer Engagement team,” said Jonathan Cresswell, Deputy Head of Technical Services.

“We’re in the embryonic stages of being an Employer Champion,” says Jonathan. “But we’re looking forward to engaging our technical staff, establishing links with professional bodies, and promoting professional registration across Technical Services and the wider University.”

Being an employer champion has boosted the confidence and momentum of the Research and Support staff, realising their value to science and the JIC. The initial successful registrants have had a positive ‘ripple effect’, mentoring colleagues to follow in their footsteps and generating wider enthusiasm and motivation across the institute.

Vanda Morgan, Training and Development Manager, John Innes Centre

Career framework through professional competences

Our professional registers respond to society’s need to attract, train, retain and retrain for a thriving science workforce, as well as encouraging improvement through continuing professional development.

For your staff, this can be an excellent tool for motivating and developing people in their roles. For students, it can set them on a defined career path and help set them apart as potential employees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RSciTech</th>
<th>RSci</th>
<th>CSci</th>
<th>CSciTeach</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registered Science Technician</td>
<td>Registered Scientist</td>
<td>Chartered Scientist</td>
<td>Chartered Science Teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Registered Science Technicians work in technical roles, delivering essential scientific services and support within laboratories, schools and universities, hospitals and in many other workplaces.</td>
<td>Registered Scientists apply their skills and knowledge in a managerial or relatively senior role, where they have responsibility for others but are not yet working at a chartered level.</td>
<td>Chartered Scientists lead teams and departments, using specialist knowledge and broader scientific understanding to develop and improve the application of science and technology.</td>
<td>Chartered Science Teachers combine scientific knowledge with pedagogic skill, delivering high standards of teaching and learning.</td>
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“From doing my professional registration I hope to get a sense of recognition for what I do and what I love doing.”

Emma Bennison, Technician at Newcastle University
Become an Employer Champion
to support the scientists of today and of the future

Get in touch to find out more
sciencecouncil.org/contact-us