JOB DESCRIPTION /
HEAD OF TECHNICAL SERVICES

University of Kent

University Operations

The University of Kent is a leading UK institution with an excellent reputation for outstanding teaching, strong research and international links. There are many new initiatives underway to build on existing strengths, such as Signature Research Themes, the Institute for Cultural and Creative Industries and the Kent and Medway Medical School.

The University is continuing to look to the future whilst responding to sector-wide challenges. Kent has set out a vision and strategy that builds upon strong foundations in education, student experience and research, embracing flexibility and growth to ensure a sustainable future for our community, and to enable the University to further its position and navigate these challenges successfully.

As part of this, the Vice-Chancellor is reshaping the senior leadership team to ensure that it is effective, efficient and focused sharply on delivering the University's ambition to be a leading civic university; delivering an outstanding student experience, outcomes, and world-leading research.

It is in the context of these exciting changes that the University has created the role of Head of Technical Services.

Reference:
O4S19050 - T5 / CSF-092-20

Salary:
Grade 9

Contract:
Ongoing
Full time

Location:
Canterbury; with requirement to work across campuses

Responsible to:
Director of the PMO

Responsible for:
Activities: Technician Commitment; Divisional H&S, COSSH oversight

Head of Profession: technical services

Job family:
Administrative, professional & managerial

Job purpose

As with any higher educational institution, Kent employs a range of technicians, technical experts and other technical staff to support the core aims of delivery of teaching, research and innovation. The majority of these specialists exist within academic divisions, although a number also work in central professional services directorates. The key purpose of this role is to bring together this technical community and deliver an excellent, effective and efficient technical workforce, equipped with the knowledge, skills and training to enhance and enable the educational and research activity taking place at Kent. They will provide leadership, strategic direction and oversight for the University's division-based technical services, ensuring that our technicians put the student experience at the fore of our technical provision.

As a signatory to the national Technician Commitment, the Head of Technical Services will be pivotal in driving forward the aims, objectives and activity committed to as part of Kent's action plan; developing and reporting on this initiative internally and externally, working with both internal and external stakeholders.

The role holder will act as *Head of Profession* for all technical services staff across the University; ensuring the professional development for these staff and ensuring there is appropriate framework in place where these staff are devolved.

Key accountabilities

The following are the main accountabilities for the job. Other duties, commensurate with the grading of the job, may also be assigned from time to time.

1. Provide leadership, develop and deliver strategy, policy, and procedures related to the delivery of technical services at the University of Kent - supporting practical-based courses in science and engineering, sports science, education, arts and humanities (including journalism, architecture and theatre) and health-related disciplines - ensuring quality, consistency and efficiency of service delivery.

2. Ensure consistent and robust health and safety related procedures are in place across all academic divisions such that they are compliant with policy developed by the Safety, Health and Environment unit so that staff, students and visitors are able to conduct education and research in a safe and effective manner.

3. Establish an agenda of "professionalisation" within technical services such that technical staff are recognised both internally and externally as qualified specialists.

4. Act as the Head of Profession for Technical Services, ensuring quality, consistency, effectiveness and development of technical provision and staff at the University to drive up standards and ensure the delivery of a nationally excellent technical service.

5. Deliver on both the actions specified in the Technician Commitment Action Plan and the ongoing self-assessment process in order to demonstrate internally and externally that the University is committed to the five themes of the commitment.

6. Engage in particular with the Information Services directorate in order to establish the boundaries and overlap between technical services and IT and create a productive working relationship to the benefit of all.

7. Lead (on behalf of University Operations) on the technical aspects of major projects (e.g. new buildings, building refurbishments, moves, transfers and relocations) liaising with key stakeholders internally and externally in order to ensure delivery of efficient and effective services as well as continuity of service.

Key challenges and decisions

The following provide an overview of the most challenging or complex parts of the role and the degree of autonomy that exists.

1. Whilst the role manages one strand of activity – technical services – the term is used to describe one of the most varied and wide-ranging staff groups at Kent. Our Technicians exist right across the University; from our chemistry labs, psychology labs and computer hubs, through to our architectural studios; and sound and lighting booths and journalism suites. As such, the variety of technical skills and range of professional expertise is wide, covering semi-skilled, skilled, academic and expert level staff. Technical staff are both core and grant funded, and roles range across research, teaching, facilities, stores, workshops and specialist roles. The Head of Technical Services has to provide coherent and effective leadership that brings together this group of staff into one community with a shared goal and common purpose despite these differences.

2. The University has a highly fragmented technical staff. Staff exist in independent units without link to the University as a whole and without a cohesive framework of policies and procedures. A key challenge for this role is therefore to break new ground and start to establish technical services as a "profession" with its own identity and sense of community. Despite starting work on the Technician Commitment, there is still a significant way to go before this can be achieved and as *Head of Profession,* the role holder will be expected to be "the expert's expert".

3. The University is going through a significant period of change. As academic schools are brought together into divisions, there will be a significant amount of work to deliver consistent and coherent processes. These will touch a number of professional services (e.g. Estates, IS, Health and Safety) and the role holder will have to negotiate and deliver consistency in the face of likely challenge.

4. The Technician Commitment Action Plan is an ambitious set of actions and goals, not all of which are likely to be achievable by the first re-submission date in October/November 2020. The role holder will need to prioritise and work within a very small resource envelope to push forward initiatives covering a number of different EG portfolios. Persuasion skills will be imperative.

5. The Head of Technical Services will need to use their varied and wide-ranging networks to exchange information about technical matters, develop cross-institutional initiatives, identify best practice in similar HEIs, and identify areas of practice for implementation at the University. This will involve liaison with institutions, funding and legislative bodies across a number of fields and disciplines; the role holder will therefore need to have a breath of knowledge across all these fields such as to be able to confidently and competently engage, influence and negotiate with key contacts.

Facts & figures

Whilst the Head of Technical Services does not directly manage staff, it does have "dotted-line" responsibility for all technical staff embedded in University divisions and departments (note, IT staff are outside this scope). At present, the University has identified around 150 technicians/technical staff within the Technician Commitment work. Many of these will be located in academic divisions, but some are in central professional services.

The Technician Commitment action plan has 44 discrete actions/targets spanning five themes. Delivery on these is a key component of this role. The current two-year action plan concludes in October 2020, at which point a new self-assessment and three-year action plan must be developed and completed.

The Head of Technical Services will be expected to advise on and contribute to budgetary spend for technical services across the six academic divisions (totalling up to £5 million), as well as inputting on major and strategic cross-institutional research bids from a technical perspective.

Internal & external relationships

Internal: Directors of Division and divisional Directors of Operations, Professional Services Directors, heads of sections in professional services areas, staff, relevant University networks, committees, boards and groups

External: Professional bodies, Technician Commitment, local, regional and national technical networks, industry (e.g. HEFCE, Institute of Science and Technology, Eastern ARC, Strategic Technical Leads in other HEI's, NHS and other healthcare providers, UKRI, Crick institute)

The role holder is expected to demonstrate a strong commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion; promoting collaboration and positive partnerships, working harmoniously with colleagues, students and other stakeholders of all cultures and backgrounds.

Health, safety & wellbeing considerations

This job involves undertaking duties which include the following health, safety and wellbeing considerations:

- Regular use of Screen Display Equipment
- Ability to travel in a timely and efficient manner regularly between campuses
- Conflict resolution

It should be noted that as Head of Profession, this role will have responsibility for many aspects of technical work and it may be necessary, ad-hoc, to interact with staff in environments where any of the following may apply for brief periods:

- Noisy working environment (above 80d)
- Repetitive limb movements
- Working with machinery
- Working with chemicals
- Potential exposure to asbestos or other dusts
- Biological Agents/Scientific Hazards (experiments/lasers etc., and waste)
- Working with radiation
- Working in confined spaces
- Working at heights
- Exposure to animals
- Contact with Human fluids (blood, saliva etc.)

Person specification

The person specification details the necessary skills, qualifications, experience or other attributes needed to carry out the job. Applications will be measured against the criteria published below.

Selection panels will be looking for clear <u>evidence</u> and <u>examples</u> in an application, or cover letter (where applicable), which back-up any assertions made in relation to each criterion.

The Head of Technical Services will be a consensus-building leader and excellent communicator. They should be an experienced technical practitioner with a breadth and depth of technical experience encompassing a varied portfolio of technical issues. They will have an in-depth knowledge of Health and Safety issues and relevant statutes, rules and regulations. It is also expected that they will be someone who is committed to high performance and continuous improvement, who is not afraid to challenge convention and to push professionalism and professionalisation.

They will be able to demonstrate the following skills, experience, abilities and personal interests:

Essential	Assessed via
• Degree in a relevant technical discipline, or equivalent qualification or experience	A
• Significant experience successfully managing a technical team in a front-facing delivery unit	A
• A comprehensive understanding of the technical and H&S landscape, with a relevant H&S management qualification. [To include knowledge of PSSR, PAT, LEV, LOLER, COSHH, LASER safety]	A,I
• Clear understanding of student experience from a technical perspective and a commitment to align University processes and procedure such as to enhance this experience	A,I
• Significant experience providing technical support to research projects along with an understanding of research project funding	A,I
• Significant experience managing large budgets and planning sustainably for the future	A,I
• A successful track record of developing and translating strategic plans and decisions into operational practice	A,I
• Demonstrable ability to deliver strategic priorities in line with wider University strategy	A,I
• Excellent and effective negotiation, influencing and communication skills, particularly the ability to persuade and inspire colleagues to work collaboratively to ensure strategic priorities are met, and the ability to produce clear and concise written materials	A,I,T
• The ability to think and act strategically and to work both consultatively and at pace	I,T
• Firm commitment to achieving the University's vision and values, with a passion for a transformative student experience and multidisciplinary, impactful research	I
• Commitment to deliver and promote equality, diversity and inclusivity in the day to day work of the role	I
• The ability to enable those at Kent to reach their full potential	I
Desirable	Assessed via
• Professional registration	A
• Cognisant of the challenges and strategic issues facing higher education	I,T

* A - Application; I - Interview; T - Test/presentation at interview stage