

Technician Provision

The level of provision of technicians is a constant battleground.

Many years ago, the ASE carried out a survey and did some calculations and came up with the concept of linking the level of technician support to the amount of science teaching via a factor known as the 'service factor'.

Technician hours = total science teaching hours x service factor.

Initially this was set at 0.85 but further studies have shown that very few if any schools were reaching this. ASE now suggest 0.65 as the service factor but it should be noted that this is a **very** rough guide.

A great deal depends on the amount and type of practical work carried out in the school, as well as whether the technicians are employed during the holidays as well.

CLEAPSS have come up with a slightly more flexible algorithm to help calculate an appropriate level of technician support.

Science provision in a school or college		
Amount of post-16 work as a percentage of all science taught ¹	80-100%	5
	50-79%	3
	20-49%	2
	5-19%	1
The science department is on a split site and/or has widely-dispersed science accommodation		5
There is a lack of adequate prep room and/or storage space		5
There is no dishwashing machine		5
The following special resources are to be cared for ²	Animals	1-5
	Greenhouse	1-5
	Pond	1-5
	Environmental area eg pond	1-5
Level of technical support provided		
Individual sets of equipment and chemicals are prepared and delivered by the technicians OR		5
Technicians prepare stock equipment and solutions for students to help themselves OR		3
Students help themselves and put away a large proportion of their own equipment		1
The total amount per week that technicians are required to help in labs during lessons and/or with individuals or groups of students:	>2 hr	5
	1-2 hr	3
	<1 hr	1
Technicians are required to repair and maintain equipment		2
Technicians clean laboratories and equipment regularly		2
Technicians are required to design and construct equipment		2
Technicians are required to carry out PAT tests on equipment	In Science dept	2
	Elsewhere in school	2

Technicians write and update departments' risk assessments for technician activities		1
Technicians are required regularly to set up	Demonstrations	1
	IT equipment	1
	Dataloggers etc	1
Technicians are required regularly to set up circuses of experiments		1

¹ This weighting may be adjusted if the class size is small.

² Individual establishments need to decide the weighting points depending on the size of these tasks, considering the fact that caring for large plant & animal collections, ponds and environmental areas can be very time consuming.

Add up the points from the various task. And you can then use the following table to calculate the service factor to put into the equation at the top.

Points total	Service factor
> 49	> 0.90
44 – 49	0.90
38 – 43	0.85
31 – 37	0.80
24 – 30	0.77
17 – 23	0.70
10 - 16	0.65

A figure of 0.65 is the minimum level of support that SSERC thinks adequate.

That said, there is nothing in law that sets down what level of technician support there should be. SSERC will always try to champion the role of the technician and we would hope that in individual schools or colleges senior management will do likewise and resist any reduction of provision.

One thing we would warn against, though, is that diligent technicians should not overwork themselves to meet the needs of the teaching*. Start and finish at the times you are meant to and take the breaks you are entitled to. If that level of support is not sufficient then it is your employers problem to employ sufficient staff and you should not help them avoid this.

* Though there will obviously be busy periods where you will want and need to do extra.