



Technician Time: external stakeholder engagement (technical community)

The “Recognising the value of technical expertise” project has relied on good engagement with and input from a number of different staff communities. The project was first introduced to the wider technical community at the Technician Commitment Signatory Event in November 2025 in London. Following this there have been sessions with both the Scotland technician network and the Technical Managers in Universities forum. This document summarises data arising from those sessions.

TechNet Scotland

TechNet Scotland is a network of 19 Scottish HEIs and research organisations, established in summer 2024. The purpose of the group is primarily to enhance communication between institutions across Scotland, encouraging and enabling local/regional networks and events, as well as specialist/thematic networks and events. More generally, the network is a forum for sharing knowledge, best practice and lessons learned, making and supporting connections, trying to ensure equitable opportunity for all technical specialisms. The technician time team presented the project to an online meeting of TNS in March 2026, including asking participants some questions.

The audience

There were 18 participants from 11 institutions/organisations.

- Edinburgh Napier University
- Glasgow School of Art
- Heriot-Watt University
- Robert Gordon University
- The National Robotarium
- University of Aberdeen
- University of Dundee
- University of Glasgow
- University of Stirling
- University of Strathclyde
- University of West of Scotland

Of the 12 respondents only one person indicated that they are happy with how technician time is costed on grants at their institution, although 36% of responders said that they are involved in decision-making around costing technician time. Comments suggested that there is a lack of clarity about the process and that consequently costs are not always fully recovered.

In terms of understanding language and terminology around costing projects the mean score was only 24%.

Considering the role of technical staff in research projects

The 29 suggested ways in which technical staff might contribute to research were mapped to the fourteen [Contributor Role Taxonomy \(CRediT\)](#) roles with responses covering 9 of those roles.

Conceptualisation	Idea generation
Data curation	Data management
Formal analysis	Analytical support Analysis (2)
Funding acquisition	
Investigation	Contributing specialist skills and knowledge Conducting research
Methodology	Methods and standards of practice (2)

	Making artefacts Physical product
Project administration	Creative solutions Project management Administration Planning (2)
Resources	Lab work Supporting setting up kit for use by research Materials Problem solving Core facility services Hands on support
Software	Bioinformatics
Supervision	Risk Management Student engagement Lab work supervision Safety Training
Validation	
Visualisation	
Writing – original draft	
Writing – review and editing	

Additionally, there was general agreement that technicians contribute to "pretty much everything" and that people could not think of ways in which technicians could not contribute.

CRediT

Participants were then asked to consider the CRediT roles, selecting those that they thought technicians might do in relation to a research project. Each role received at least three "votes".

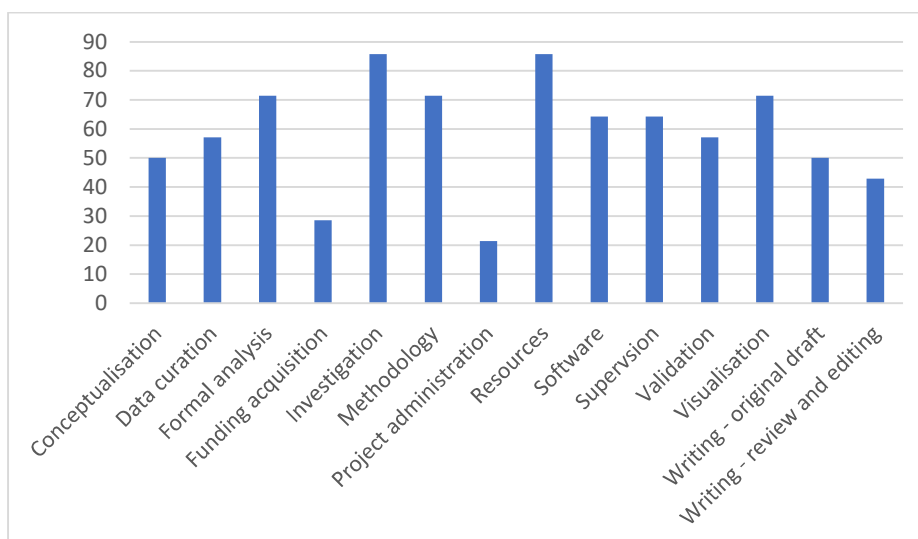


Figure 1: Percent of participants indicating CRediT roles that might be done by technical staff



TMU workshop

[Technical Managers in Universities](#) is an informal voluntary association of technical managers and supervisors working in the UK higher education and research sector. The technician time project team were invited to deliver a workshop at the 2026 TMU Conference in Durham in March 2026. The hour-long workshop discussed the background to the project and progress to date, also taking the opportunity to understand more about perceptions and practice related to the costing of technician time across the sector through a real-time Wooclap survey.

The audience

There were 66 participants in the Wooclap survey from 26 universities.

Participating universities:	Job titles represented in the participant group:
Birmingham City University Cranfield University Durham University Imperial College London Keele University Loughborough University London South Bank University Manchester Metropolitan University Newcastle University Northumbria University Queen Mary University of London University of Brighton University of Chester University of Cumbria University College London University of Liverpool University of Hertfordshire University of Kent University of Leeds University of Manchester University of Salford University of Sheffield University of Suffolk University of Westminster University of York Warwick University	Centre Manager Facility Manager Head of Bioimaging Head of Technical Operations Head of Technical Services Head Technician Hub Manager Laboratory Manager Programme Manager Senior Lab Technician Senior Manager (Technical Services & Facilities) Senior Photography Technician Senior Technical Officer (Senior) Technical Manager (Senior) Technical Services Manager Teaching Laboratories Services Manager Technical Operations Manager Technical Team Manager Workshop Manager

To understand a little more about the audience, they were asked about involvement with and understanding of costing of technician time.

Only one participant indicated that they are happy with how technician time is costed on grants in their institution and on exploring this, it is clear that this “happiness” was based on local practice within their faculty, largely driven by them. Participants confirmed that there is an absence of institutional level guidance and support.

Of those who responded just over half (51%) of participants confirmed that they are involved in decision-making around the costing of technician time on research grants, industrial research grants

and other commercial/industrial work. Based on comments received this seems to be done in an inconsistent way, often dependent on the grant applicant and variably done within institutions.

Participants were asked to match funding terminology to definitions. The average score was ~40% (including missing answers; 65% if missing answers are excluded).

- There is confusion about the difference between Directly Allocated and Directly incurred, with more than half (52%) of responders mixing them up.
- 92% of responders selected the correct definition of “Estates costs”.
- 60-70% of responders correctly defined “Infrastructure technician costs”, “Indirect costs”, “Full economic costs” and “Full-time equivalent”

Considering the role of technical staff in research projects

Responses to the question “What are the different ways in which technicians might contribute to a research project?” are summarised in the word cloud:



Figure 2: Word cloud of technician contributions to research projects

The 146 “contributions” were subsequently mapped to the fourteen [Contributor Role Taxonomy \(CRediT\)](#) roles with responses covering 11 of those roles.

Conceptualisation	Design Development of ideas Expertise Lead Project lead Support ideas
Data curation	
Formal analysis	Data Data analysis (2) Data interpretation Experimental design and analysis Undertake analysis
Funding acquisition	Grant application
Investigation	Assist data collection Complete research experiments



	Creating output film Creation of robotics systems Data collection (2) Data generation Design and manufacture of components Direct support “at the coal face” Preparing and running samples Running equipment Sample prep System building
Methodology	Consult and build of experimental rigs Consultation on approaches, especially regarding equipment use. Continuity in methods and equipment use Current technology advice Experiment design (3) Innovate (2) Instrumentation upgrades to meet requirements Method development (6) Specialist facility advice Specialist knowledge
Project administration	Equipment procurement (7) Field support Goods in/out (2) H&S paperwork Manage grant spend Planning (2) Purchasing and budgets
Resources	Build equipment/experimental set-up (2) Core facility Direct research support Equipment support (2) Infrastructure support (2) Maintenance (3) Manage equipment and calibration Servicing instruments Support (6) Sustainability Problem solving/troubleshooting (9) Waste (2)
Software	IT/equipment support. Software knowledge Software management
Supervision	Connecting researchers Continuity, authority, background experience + knowledge Deliver a specific research package / activity Ethics H&S advice/compliance (4) Legal compliance Pastoral care through project Substitutes for missing PIs

	Supervision of students and ECRs (3) Training of staff and students (12) Wellbeing
Validation	Feasibility information - Instrumentation spec Infrastructure feasibility assessments
Visualisation	
Writing – original draft	
Writing – review and editing	Peer Review

There were some contributions which did not clearly map to specific CRediT roles, including:

- Experience
- Common sense
- Health and safety
- Sanity check

CRediT

The question “Which of the CRediT roles do you think technicians might do in relation to a research project?” highlighted that all 14 CRediT roles might be expected to be held or undertaken by technical staff, with each role receiving at least 8 positive responses:

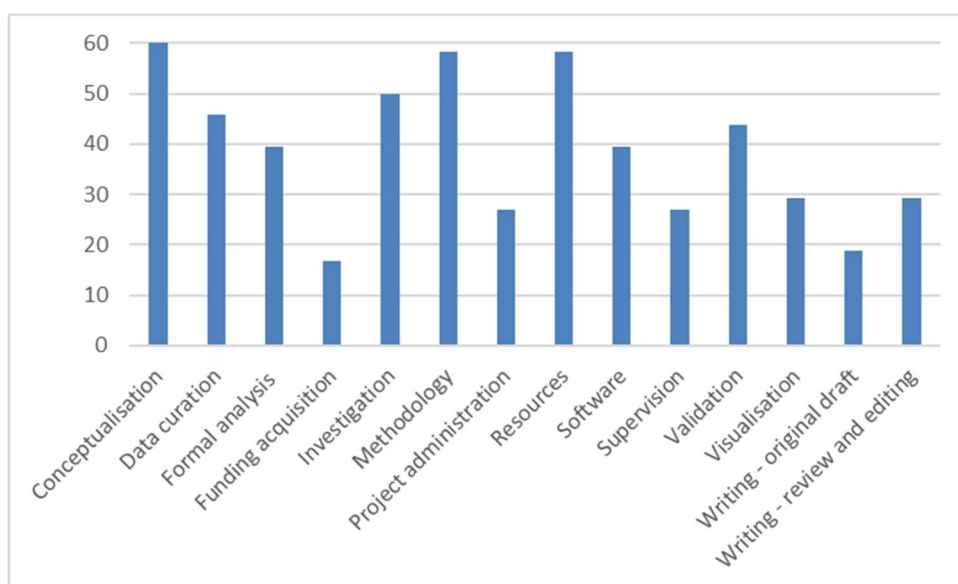


Figure 3: Percent of participants indicating CRediT roles that might be done by technical staff

Participants were asked to consider which of the contributor roles might apply to the “Specialist”¹ and “Technician”² project roles as defined by UKRI, as well as which roles might be covered by “Infrastructure Technician Costs”³. The profile of the three plots highlights some differences in the roles, as perceived by participants:

¹ A Specialist is defined as an individual who brings specialist skills and intellectual input to the project

² A “Technician” is defined as someone who provides general technical support to a project as required (but not the infrastructure technician tasks)

³ Infrastructure Technician Costs cover “staff providing general non-project-specific support for the research infrastructure”

Roles covered by “infrastructure technician costs”

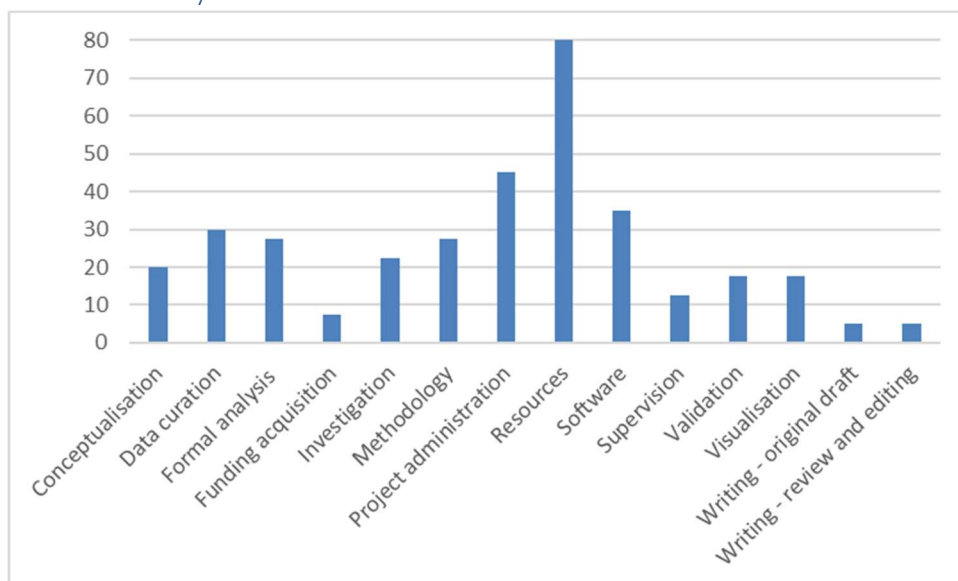


Figure 4: Percent of participants indicating CRediT roles that might be covered by “Infrastructure Technician Costs”

Roles undertaken by the “Technician” role

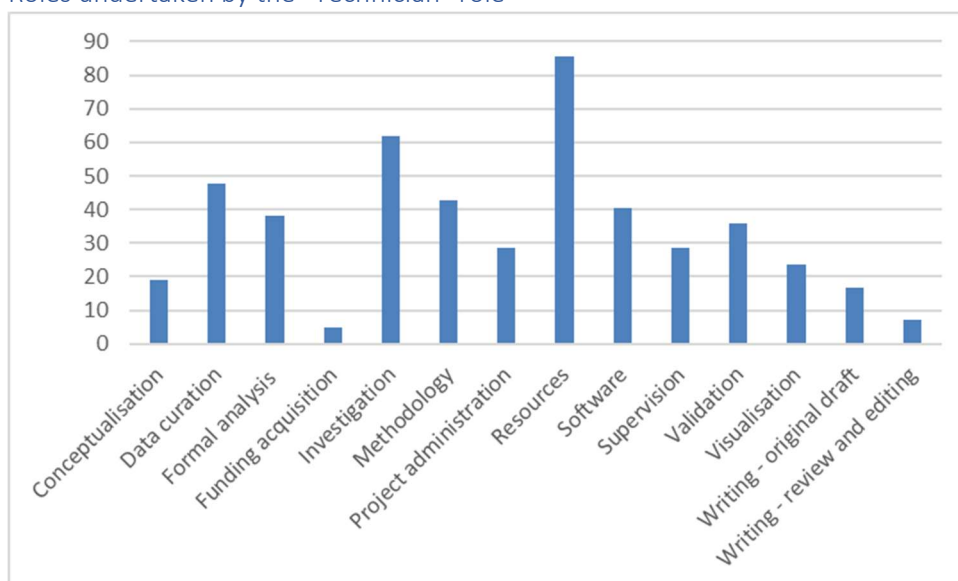


Figure 5: Percent of participants indicating CRediT roles that might be done by technical staff assigned the “Technician” role on a project

Roles undertaken by the “Specialist” role

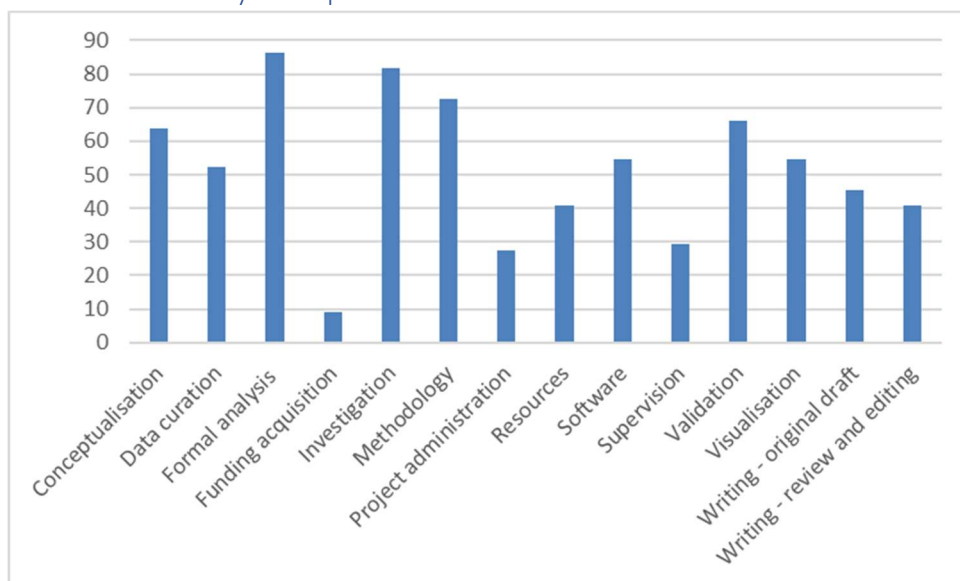


Figure 6: Percent of participants indicating CRediT roles that might be done by technical staff assigned the “Specialist” role on a project