

RCUK Statement of expectations for technology / skills specialists

Technology / skills specialists¹ make critical intellectual contributions to research through the provision of core technical excellence, and in maintaining and developing new technologies and methodologies across all of the Research Councils' remits. Research Councils (RCs) support technology / skills specialists through grant funding because we recognise that the skills these people provide are essential to the delivery of cutting edge research. Our support is to:

- Attract and retain researchers with cutting edge skills and expertise for the future UK national capability
- Collaboratively drive forward innovative areas of research
- Support Research Councils' ability to maximise the return on investments

In addition to the responsibilities and expectations set out in the concordat² to support the career development of researchers and technical professional staff, RCs want to ensure that technology / skills specialists funded through our investments are well supported as equal members of research teams, and have access to appropriate career development and progression.

Expectations of Research Organisations (ROs)

- Recognise and value the experience and expertise of technology / skills specialists as an essential part of the research workforce, and who add to the reputation of the RO, the RCs and the United Kingdom.
- Establish clear career structures with specified criteria for progression, to enable future career transitions.
- Provide transparent reward and recognition frameworks based on criteria relevant to the specialist skills, team based approach to working, and outputs specific to technology / skills specialists.
- Offer support for appropriate career development, such as access to specialist training and travel budgets for the development of cutting edge skills to support technical and methodological innovation.
- Provide clear guidance for principal investigators on how to fully cost technology / skills specialists on grants, including when they can be named as applicants or co-investigators.

Research Councils will

- Value technology / skills specialists as important members of the RC community and wider research workforce.
- Provide clear guidance on how technology / skills specialists and research facilities can be supported through grant funding.
- Ensure proposals are assessed on the quality of the research and are funded with the full economic costs of the resources necessary to deliver the research.
- When relevant, make sure assessments of proposals are informed by reviewers with appropriate technological and methodological expertise.
- Meet the above expectations of research organisations in the case of technology/skills specialists employed within RC Institutes, in line with our employer obligations for supporting the careers of all RC employed staff.

Expectations of Technology / skills specialists

To proactively manage their career development by:

- Identifying and pursuing opportunities for career development for example, through training and continuous professional development.
- Taking an active role in the wider research community for example, by supporting RC peer review, training others, and engaging with emerging policy discussions with research funders, ROs and central government.
- Maximising the impact of their work through appropriate knowledge exchange, collaborations and engagement activities.

¹ Technology / skills specialists maintain and develop new and improved approaches to implement technologies and methodologies to better address research questions. Technology / skills specialists have specialist knowledge and expertise and they often work as part of co-ordinated teams spanning different disciplines and geographical centres, which work together to tackle contemporary research questions. May include, but not limited to: data scientists, data engineers, archivists, informaticians, statisticians, software developers, audio-visual technologists, technical professional staff and individuals staffing core facilities, across all disciplines.

² www.vitae.ac.uk/policy/concordat-to-support-the-career-development-of-researchers and www.vitae.ac.uk/vitae-publications/guides-briefings-and-information/vitae-concordat-discussion-paper-2016.pdf