



Technician **Commitment**

Evaluating Impact through Self-Assessment & Future Action Planning



Babraham Institute staff photo, 2024

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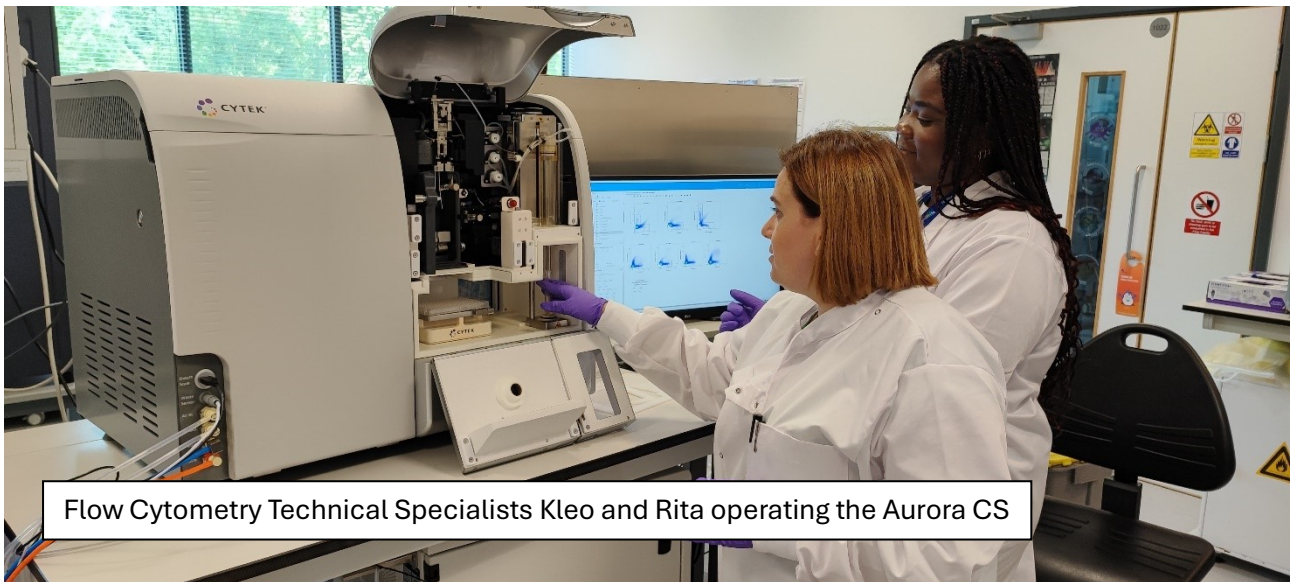
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Flow Cytometry Technical Specialists Kleo and Rita operating the Aurora CS



BSU Technical Specialist Sarah at an isolation hood



Stores Technical Specialist Tom checking orders

Please provide an overview of technical staff structures in your organisation

The Babraham Institute (BI) is a life science research institute with the mission to understand the mechanistic biology that underpins health across the life course, thereby defining new strategies to promote healthy ageing. BI is situated on the Babraham Research Campus (BRC) which supports early-stage bioscience companies. Currently there are over 60 companies on the campus employing approximately 2,000 people.



Figure 1. Babraham Research Campus. Institute buildings are outlined in the white boxes

On 23rd May 2024, BI comprised 295 employees, 48 PhD students and 37 science visitors. The employee breakdown is thus: 84 employees work in the science departments as Group Leaders, Postdoctoral Researchers and Staff Scientists; 55 work in operational and other professional roles across other departments; 44 work in the Babraham Nursery; and 112 employees are classified as a technician by our definition (38% of the workforce) in quote 1.

Technicians are skilled and knowledgeable in their subject areas and provide practical, hands-on support to our researchers. Their specialist skills, experience, and ability to develop and implement methodologies enable our researchers to deliver world class science.

The collective term we use is Technical Specialists.

Quote 1. Our definition of Technical Specialist

In 2020, we asked teams and groups to self-identify as members of our Technical Specialist community (TS). The community includes staff working in the following areas:

Science Facilities – centralised shared core facilities.

Biological Support Unit - provides housing and care for pathogen-free rodents.

Health and Safety & Quality Assurance - oversees health, safety, and quality assurance of research.

Technical Services – provide operational support for researchers including upkeep & maintenance of shared laboratories, technical equipment, provision of sterile glassware, and other materials.

Computing - provides IT services including Institute network and infrastructure provision; connection to wide area Janet link(s); management of IT servers; scientific data storage; and user support.

Stores - provides on-site laboratory consumables and small equipment, in addition to managing external purchasing of Institute-owned and consignment stock.

Lab-based Research Assistants and Technicians – undertake research projects within, and provide support to, research groups.



Figure 2. Technical Specialist Logo shows the logo that accompanies communications and intranet pages.

Technical Specialists are distributed throughout most departments and there is a high degree of matrix working, creating opportunities to interact with colleagues across departments, for example on committees, research projects and other initiatives (Figure 3). Figure 8 shows representation of TS on committees.

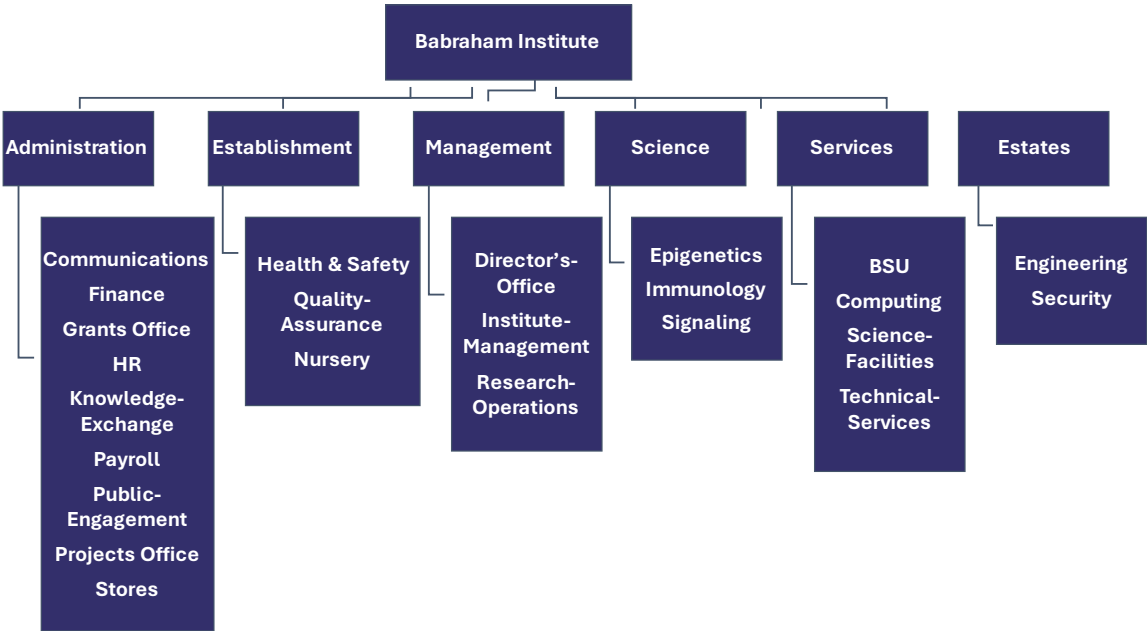


Figure 3. Departmental structure of the Babraham Institute. The number of Technical Specialists included in brackets.

Despite these opportunities for interaction, we have experienced challenges with the cohort developing a clear sense of identity and community. This is exacerbated by the dispersed locations across multiple buildings (Figure 4) and the high containment level status of some of the BSU units, which makes it challenging to enter and leave the facility for events. Future work will attempt to overcome these impediments (see Future Action 8).

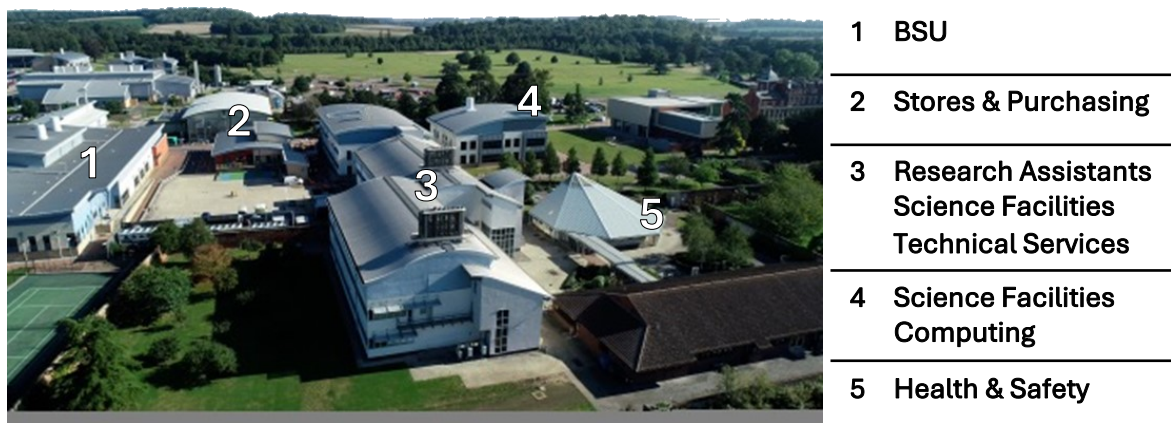


Figure 4. Location of Technical Specialists across Babraham Institute buildings

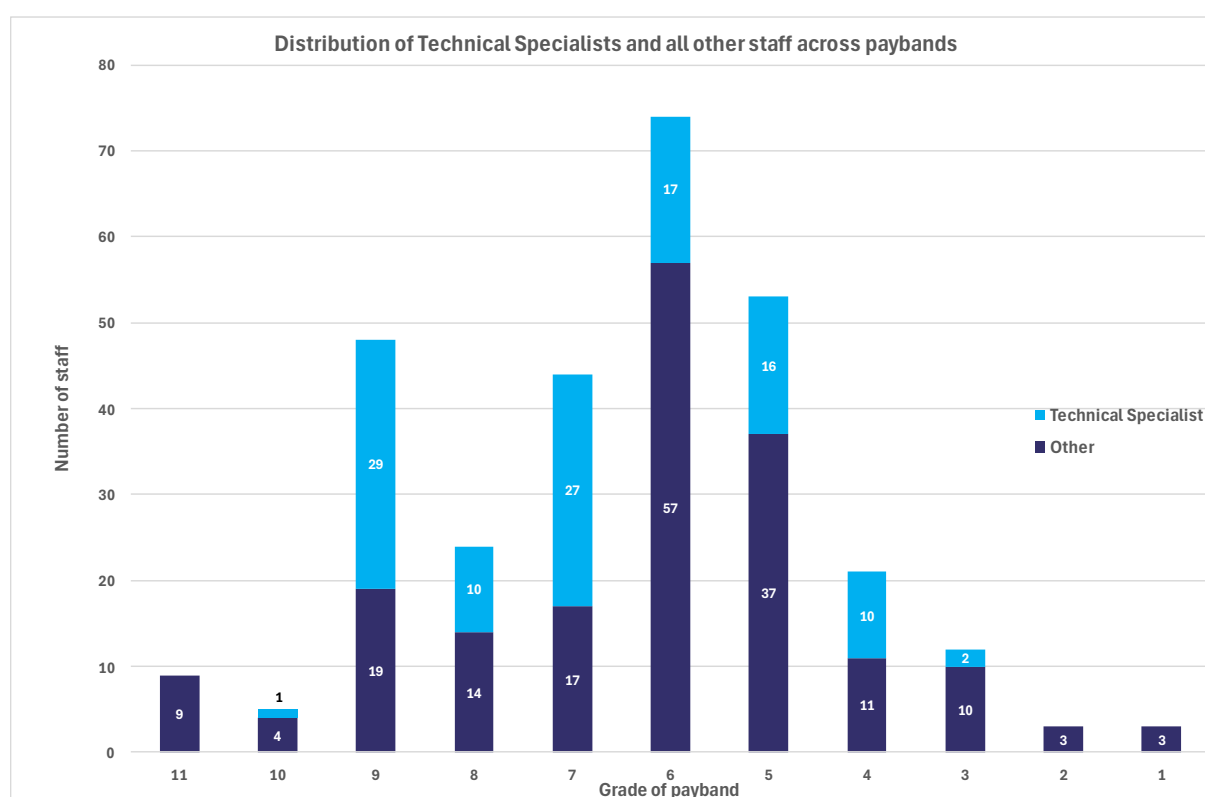


Figure 5. Pay band distribution of the technical specialists at the Babraham Institute in comparison with all other job roles. The lower the band number, the higher the salary.

BI has a single pay scale across all roles, there are no job families. This provides more flexibility and increased job fluidity enhancing individual opportunities for our staff. Our pay scale ranges from 11 (lowest) to 1 (highest); distribution of our TS relative to all other employees is shown in Figure 5. For context, post-doctoral scientists start on Band 6. Figure 6 shows the current gender split in the TS cohort separated into the TS cohort groups; we have further displayed this by distribution across the pay bands in figure 7.

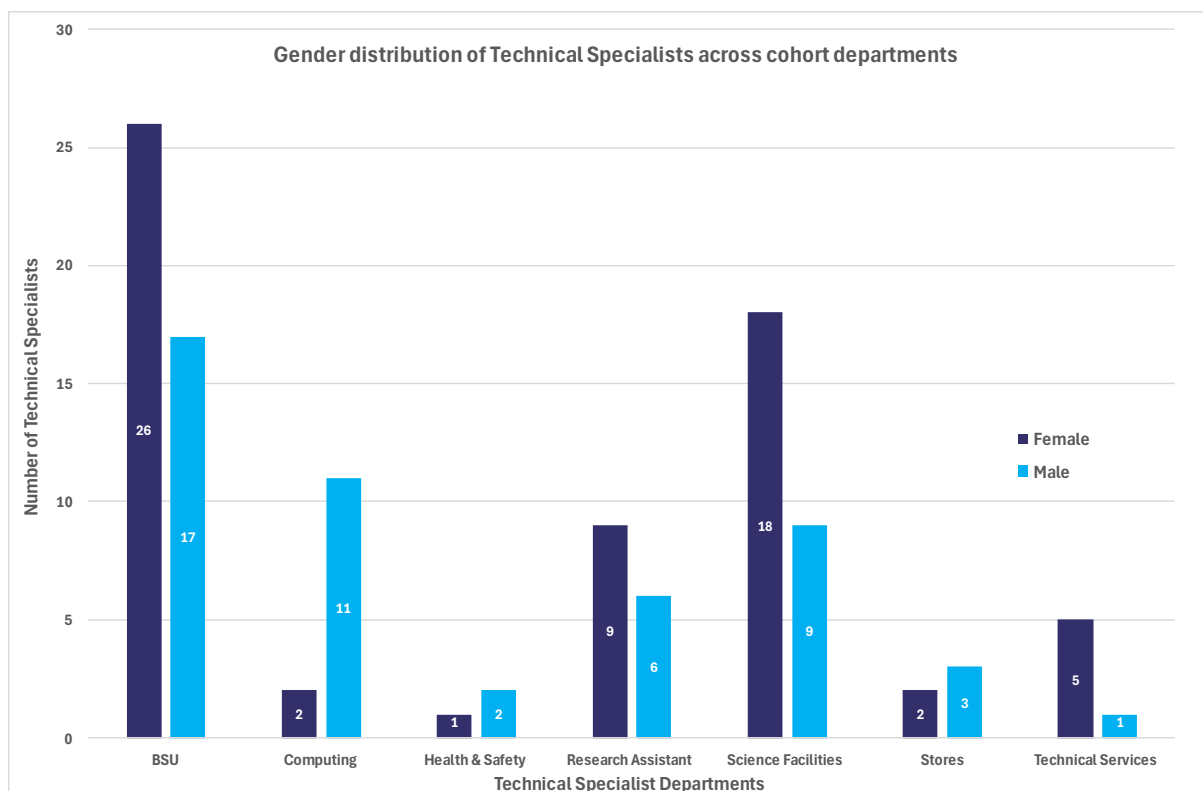


Figure 6. Gender distribution of TS at BI separated across cohort departments

Although this breakdown is not required for a Stage 2 review, we consider it useful baseline data for us to be familiar with as it will enable us to monitor the impact of the specific and general interventions that we plan to implement, either directly through this action plan, or the wider Institute initiatives (see Future Action 6).

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and pay scale information is being recoding in our HR system for future analysis and review.

There are five mechanisms for staff to move to a higher band. These include, the personal promotion scheme allows any staff member to apply for a promotion based on their own merits. The Job Evaluation and Grading Scheme (JEGS) is used to assess the grading of the responsibilities within the post, rather than the individual contributions of the person fulfilling the role. The qualifications gained scheme allows promotion by passing accredited qualifications. All staff also undertake an annual appraisal in the spring.

Job descriptions and career pathways are discussed later in this document and in Future Action 1.

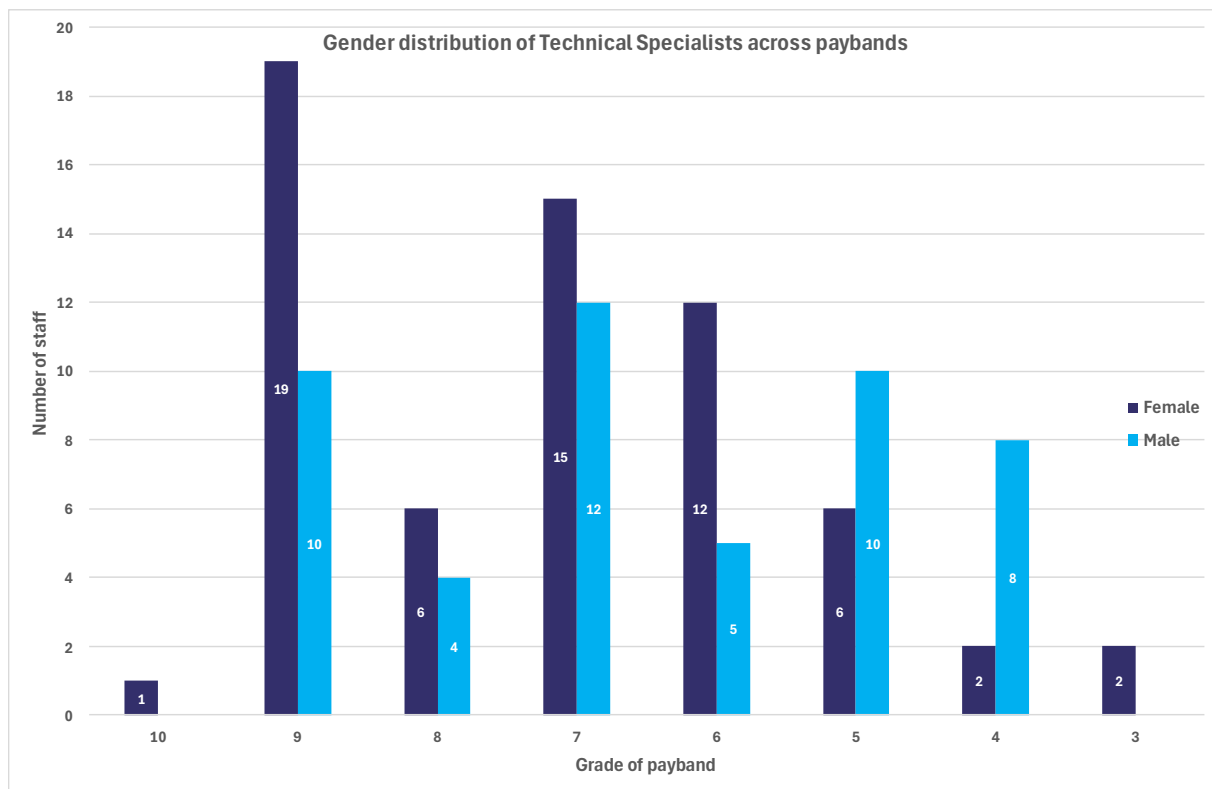
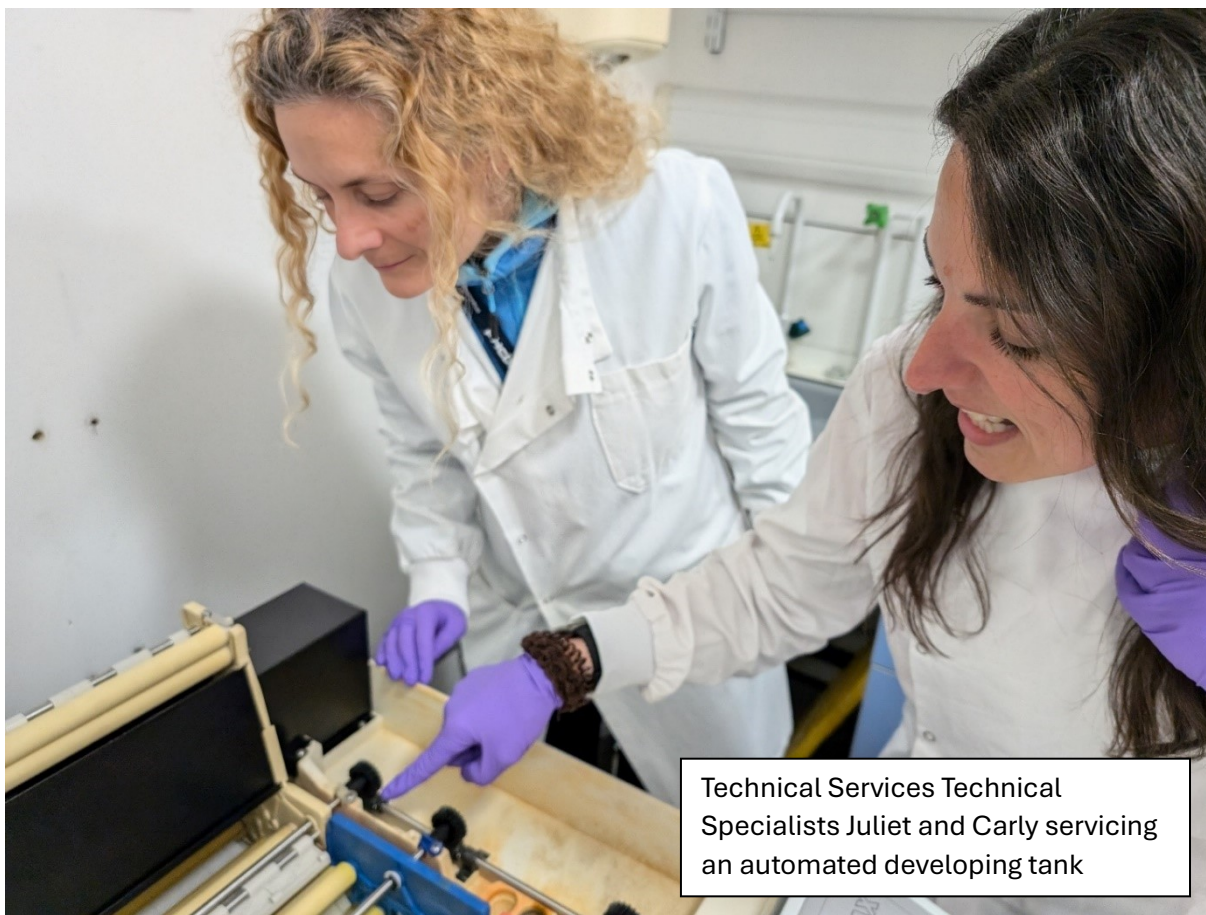
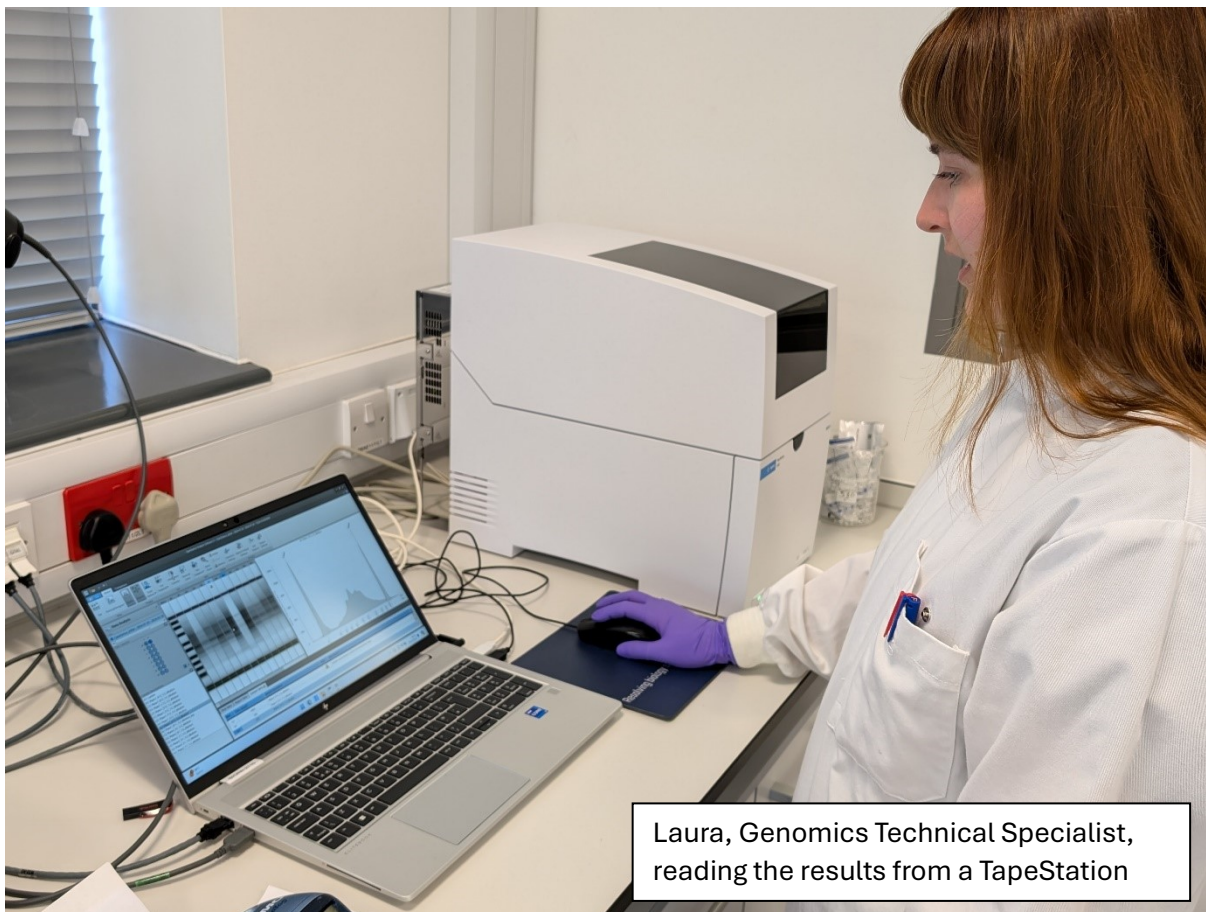


Figure 7. Gender distribution of Technical Specialists across pay bands

There are numerous interactions between our TS cohort and tenant companies on the BRC. These range from access to the high-end equipment and expertise in the Science Facilities and BSU, consultancies and access to other equipment, and knowhow through the other departments. There are currently an undetermined number of TS working within the companies on the BRC campus. Even though they are outside of the current “university and research institution” remit of the Technician Commitment (TC) we are in the process of including them in our TS networking events and selected training sessions. This is supported through the BRC Community Initiative and the BRC Collaboration Fund. Expanding our reach to TS on the wider campus will create a larger, more diverse, and better funded TS community giving rise to more opportunities to promote the four pillars of the TC. Exposure to technical colleagues on the campus will encourage cross-sector mobility and provide a wider range of career development opportunities as a result.



Technical Services Technical Specialists Juliet and Carly servicing an automated developing tank



Laura, Genomics Technical Specialist, reading the results from a TapeStation

Please tell us about your institution's approach to the Technician Commitment since becoming a signatory.

BI has worked hard at integrating the four pillars of the TC into the fabric of the institute. This is seen through committees, policies, events, and changes in the culture of BI.

A Technician Commitment Steering Group (TCSG) was set up with the remit to “*embed the principles of the Technician Commitment throughout the Babraham Institute.*” The TCSG includes members of the TS cohort that represent the diversity of job roles at BI. It is currently comprised of a chair and eight members from the cohort representing BSU (2), Computing (1), Science Facilities (3), Stores & Purchasing (1), and Technical Services (1). Other associate members represent Human Resources, Communications, Equality & Diversity, Research Operations, and a Senior Research Group Leader. The latter two are also members of the Babraham Executive Committee (BEC) which determines Institute policy and deals with the highest level of strategic business.

Participation in the TCSG by senior leadership shows the importance placed on the initiative and allows a direct communication conduit with senior management. The institutional lead reports to BEC twice a year to discuss progress and request additional resources and advice. This increases the visibility of the TS cohort and enables issues to be directly addressed with people with the authority to make the change. The BEC members of the TCSG champion the “technician voice” as part of all decision-making processes.

Since 2020 the proportion of Technical Specialists on both operational and strategic committees has increased from 33% -> 43% and 23% -> 32% respectively. Additionally, a Technical Specialist is now a member of BEC. This is a demonstration of the role Technical Specialists play in decision making at BI.



Figure 8. Committees at the Babraham and the proportion of Technical Specialists in the membership

The Institutional Lead has changed since our signatory event. The original TCSG Chair, Danielle Hoyle (Head of Research Operations and Deputy Director, Operations), stepped down in 2022 and was replaced by Christopher Hall (Deputy Manager of the Flow Cytometry Facility) who is a member of the

TS cohort. One of the reasons behind this change was to emphasise ownership by the TS cohort and increase engagement within the community.

BI recently completed its 5-year review, the Institute Assessment Exercise (IAE), to determine our BBSRC Strategic Funding envelope. This exercise included the requirement to develop a Research Culture Statement (RCS). This statement describes the behaviours and expectations of our research community which in turn influences career prosperity and personal well-being. Several parts of this statement align closely with the TC:

- Recognise and reward all academic and professional services staff and students
- Develop opportunities for different career pathways for all staff and students
- Deliver other relevant activities: Technicians Commitment, Research Integrity and Sustainability
- Embed Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for all staff and students
- Train the next generation of researchers, technical specialists, entrepreneurs, and innovators

Placing emphasis on improving the working environment and careers of TS has become engrained in the fabric of BI. One objective of the RCS was to commission the Institute Culture Consultation (ICC) project. Facilitated by an external consultant, this six-month project was open and honest dialogue with everyone in the Institute's community to update the Institute's Culture Strategy and embed team science, by asking 'what does that mean for us', and 'how do we get there'. Engagement with staff was facilitated by 14 Culture Champions (six of whom were from the TS community; Figure 9).



Figure 9. The ICC Culture Champions. TS Cohort members indicated with an asterisk.

“We aim to be an employer of choice in supporting and developing our staff, providing an outstanding training environment for apprentices, PhD students, Technical Specialists, Post Doctoral Researchers, Group Leaders, and employees in all non-scientific roles.

We believe that excellent science and resulting social and economic impacts can only progress and flourish in an inclusive research culture that values integrity, openness, equity, and diversity. We will promote an environment for everyone to take pride in their contribution to the delivery of world-class bioscience research.”

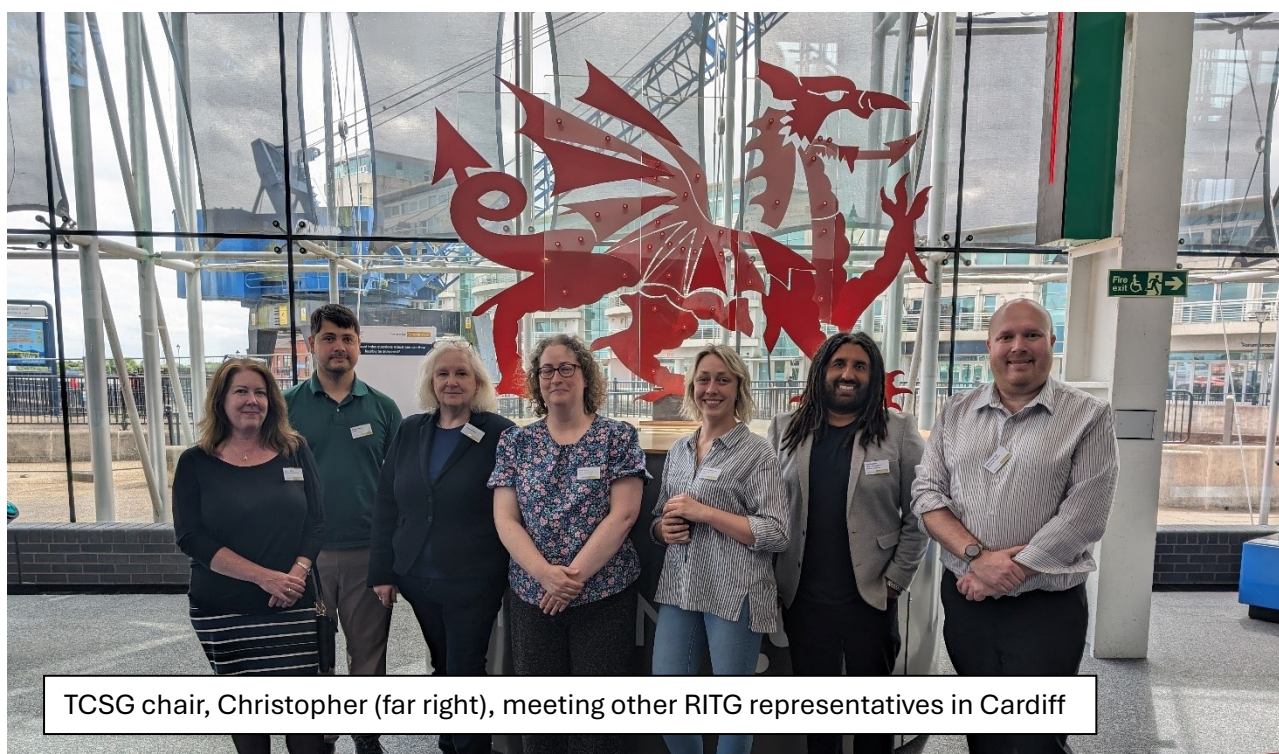
Simon Cook, Director of the Babraham Institute

Quote 2. Director Simon Cook's vision for an inclusive research culture, taken from the Institute Assessment Exercise (quinquennial review) documentation

Our BBSRC Strategic Funding budget includes increased resources and ringfenced funds for the TS cohort. This represents a flexible funding source that can be used for personal and professional development (PPD), a budget for the TCSG, travel funds for the TS cohort, and funding for inter-institute TC activities in the form of supporting the Research Institute Technician Group (RITG).

RITG is a group comprising of nine research institutes in the Southeast and East of England who have signed up the TC and who have similar structures and aims. Through involvement in this group, we have shared ideas and concepts of how to benefit the TS cohort and we have set up a biennial careers symposium and awards ceremony. More details of the impact are described later in this document.

Other changes include increasing TS awareness through participation in the BI Lab Talks annual symposium, increased visibility on the external and internal web pages, new permanent contracts for technical specialists, and extended notice periods for core facility staff. These improvements are expanded upon in the following sections of this review.



TCSG chair, Christopher (far right), meeting other RITG representatives in Cardiff

Please provide a RAG analysis on your institutional 24-month action plan

Table 1. RAG analysis of previous action plan

Action	Details	Comments
Action 1. Increase the visibility of the skills and expertise of the cohort VISIBILITY	a. Develop TC Intranet & Internet pages b. Promote activities in institute newsletters, blog posts, and tweets c. Exploit networking channels, such as Research Institutes Technician Group, LinkedIn, and Twitter feeds	The intranet and internet pages are completed and up to date. The Communications team regularly promote the TS internally and externally.
Action 2. Broaden the eligibility criteria and scope of annual awards VISIBILITY	a. Review the current suite of prizes and identify gaps in representation b. Work with HR and other stakeholders to broaden the scope of award & develop specific awards linked to HR values and competencies	The Staff Recognition Award was established in 2020 after a consultation with the TS cohort identified that most existing prizes were restricted, due to their scope, to research staff. “Non-Scientific Talk” prize (alongside the postdoc and student talk prizes) established at Lab Talks to signify the importance placed on Team Science TS cohort are eligible for most prizes at Lab Talks. Prizes are targeted at, and won by, TS cohort members. Michael Berridge Prize - awarded annually - for contribution to an outstanding piece of science at the Institute – is open to Science Facility staff (2024) Closed Action; scope expanded in 2024-27 Action #3.
Action 3. Ensure the institute's policy on authorship and acknowledgement is followed VISIBILITY	a. Ensure wide distribution of the policy for authorship and acknowledgements on research b. Distribute to all staff and students at induction c. Include policy on the induction checklist for managers d. Highlight as a 'high profile' policy at the policy launch event e. Routinely share publication data and ask researchers to consider whether they had correctly acknowledged everyone	The policy is a mandatory on the policy tracking system and awareness has tripled in the past two years. The Policy was highlighted to staff via TV screens in communal spaces, at induction, in the newsletter, at Lab Talks, and at the all staff townhall “Infosite”. Tracking acknowledgements is a manual process; the data has not yet been audited by researchers. Carried over to 2024-27 Action #7
Action 4. Solicit Feedback VISIBILITY	Encourage solicitation of feedback by positive advertising throughout site such as message board messages, leaflets, posters around site	A Newsletter piece about the benefits of saying “Thank You” was published in 2021. A “thank you” system is currently in development by HR.
Action 5. Develop a skills directory to share expertise VISIBILITY	a. All staff should be encouraged to complete their Delve profile to include skills and expertise b. Develop a set of keywords that can be used to aid searching c. Identify essential user attributes which would be beneficial to share	Several attempts were made to promote the use of Delve to capture Skills & Expertise, but uptake of the system was extremely low and the action closed due to a lack of interest.

Action 6. Increase the participation of the cohort at inter-institute activities VISIBILITY	Liaise with organisers and senior managers to identify opportunities for inclusion	<p>TCSG presents at BEC twice per year.</p> <p>Increased participation by non-research active teams at Lab Talks. Shows wider impact of the TC beyond our technical specialists.</p> <p>Bi-annual update on TC activities at Infosite.</p> <p>Training funds have been allocated to the cohort.</p> <p>FTMA funding from BBSRC was well utilised by the cohort every year.</p> <p>TS representation on the Institute Culture Consultation.</p> <p>Closed Action; scope expanded in 2024-27 Action #4.</p>
Action 7. Robust Data Collection SUSTAINABILITY	a. Identify which datasets are required to demonstrate impact of the Technician Commitment to internal and external stakeholders b. Establish mechanisms for data collection and analysis on a regular basis	<p>Several datasets have been identified and utilised. Some key metrics are missing, e.g. number of acknowledgements, training courses and conferences attended, awards won, and attendance on PPD programmes.</p> <p>The staff engagement survey allows the TS cohort to be separately analysed.</p> <p>Carried over to 2024-27 Action #6.</p>
Action 8. Develop sustainability and resilience by upskilling people SUSTAINABILITY	a. Encourage exchange of technical skills between technicians - both within and between institutes b. Development of inter-institute networks	<p>Funding for TS exchanges have been extensively used and tangible results have been shown (e.g. FTMA, CTLS Staff Exchange)</p> <p>The Roving Researcher has previously supported facilities skills gaps during absences, but is aimed more at post-doctoral and PhD work.</p> <p>Closed Action; scope expanded in 2024-27 Action #2 and #3.</p>
Action 9. Promote the benefits of being affiliated with a professional body RECOGNITION	a. Create intranet page for professional registration information b. Promote informative events regarding professional registration	<p>An intranet page has been set up and the BSU has multiple professionally registered members. The BSU also holds a career day promoting registration.</p> <p>It remains unclear how many members of the Institute are affiliated with a professional body or are professionally registered.</p> <p>This needs to be more widely advertised and membership and impact measured.</p> <p>Carried over to 2024-27 Action #11.</p>

10. Develop clearer guidelines around how staff can progress in their role CAREER DEVELOPMENT	a. Consistently prepare clear job descriptions indicating progression targets; offer training to line managers on developing useful job descriptions b. Promote development opportunities i.e. seminars, training, collaborations with other establishments c. Encourage discussions on progression and development and accuracy of job description during annual appraisals d. Contribute to the development of a new appraisal system	Some departments have developed bespoke career development plans for staff to support retention and recruitment: the BSU, Computing, and Flow Cytometry. The impact of this needs to be evaluated. Managers have been encouraged to discuss job descriptions during appraisals. There is annual training for appraisers and appraisees. Training specifically for TS is being offered, e.g. “Customer Service”. 136 promotions have been awarded to TS and non-scientific staff over the review period. New appraisal system has not yet been implemented. Carried over to 2024-27 Action #1.
11. Investigate how we formally acknowledge experience and specialist skills CAREER DEVELOPMENT	a. Encourage discussions on accuracy of job titles during annual appraisals b. Initiate discussions on how recognition progression may be compensated c. Provide training to managers to ensure they are skilled to handle conversations about progression and compensation d. Contribute to the development of a new appraisal system	HR have been progressing this across the whole institute, but it is ongoing. Carried over to 2024-27 Action #1.
Action 12. Promote training and other personal professional development activities for cohort CAREER DEVELOPMENT	a. Ensure all line managers discuss training and development during annual appraisals b. Make access to training and development transparent	Training requirements and requests are included in the appraisal guidelines. Ringfenced funds have been made available to the TS cohort. The Training section of the intranet has been overhauled and structured to make it easier to find cohort specific training
13. Improve communication and transparency around promotion and pay awards CAREER DEVELOPMENT	a. Improve clarity on what merits an exceptional pay award and feedback on unsuccessful nominations b. Ensure the Grading & Remuneration Committee consider roles holistically and do not use simple metrics of success c. Develop anonymous case studies of successful exceptional pay awards as guidance for staff and line managers	HR have been progressing this across the whole institute. Guidelines have been produced describing how pay awards are graded. The personal promotion scheme has been made more transparent and the process clearly defined, however no case studies have been produced to date. Closed Action; scope expanded in 2024-27 Action #1.

Please tell us how you evidence that your action plan has had/is having impact?

It can be difficult to quantify the benefits of the TC in the short time frame being reported. However, we are pleased to report that we have generated both quantitative metrics and qualitative information that show the impact of the action plan. Some evidence comes from the bi-annual Staff Engagement Survey (SES) and the recent Institute Culture Consultation (ICC) exercise. Both are programmes where the opinions of staff were actively solicited regarding their experiences working at BI and how they think it could be improved. The SES is conducted by an external company and results are anonymised and split into cohorts, one of which is TS. The ICC was a unique opportunity for staff to voice their experiences of working at BI in a safe environment of their peers; consultations were conducted in small groups, larger focus groups and online forums. All staff were invited to participate and 40% were involved. Whilst we have not been able to stratify the outcomes of the ICC by TS cohort, and thus they do not provide evidence of TC impact, the resulting Roadmap for Team Science has informed some of the future actions of both this and our new Athena Swan application (to be submitted in 2024). Quote 3 indicates that the aspirations of the Commitment are seen throughout the institute:

This project has shown that there ... is a real strength of purpose within the organisation. Employees enjoy working with their colleagues and have good relationships. They feel proud to be contributing to the science and they like the environment they work in. There is a strength of purpose and focus on the science.

Quote 3. Feedback from the ICC consultants on the Institute Culture Consultation exercise

Quantitative Evidence

Action 1: Increase the visibility of the skills and expertise of the cohort.

- The institute regularly features TS in their blog posts, social media channels, and in the staff newsletter. Blog posts included:
 - The journey and impact of a pipette tip
 - My career: How I became a facilities scientist
 - Apprenticeships in animal care: insights from our Biological Support Unit team
 - Engaging the next generation of scientists in understanding animal research
 - My apprenticeship experience: from the IT helpdesk to infrastructure specialist
 - Cracking the Code: The Cambridge and Antwerp Bioinformatics Three-Day Hackathon
 - From A to T, C, G: a day in the life of a sequencing specialist
- The latest newsletter at the time of writing (March 2024) discussed issues directly affecting the TS cohort or news from the cohort 12 times, including an interview with a TS. February edition = 12 times, and January edition = 8 times, including two articles on awards won by the TS cohort.
- Every internal newsletter includes a section about the Technician Commitment with links to the relevant internal resources.
- Since 2021 there have been 11 externally facing blog posts written by, or about, the TS cohort¹.
- Since 2021 there have been 10 press releases written about the TS cohort²

¹ [Blog | Babraham Institute](#) (more can be found by adjusting the filter)

² [News | Babraham Institute](#) (more can be found by adjusting the filter)

Action 2: Broaden the eligibility criteria and scope of annual awards.

- The BI annual awards recognise the impact staff have on the institute over the previous years. These now include several TS specific awards and awards eligible to both TS and research staff.
- These awards include Facility of the Year, best non-research talk, Public Engagement, knowledge exchange, and research integrity.
 - This year 4 TS won a Staff Recognition Award


Action 3: Ensure the institute's policy on authorship and acknowledgement is followed.


- We have undertaken extensive promotion of the policy, including having a rotating slide during the sessions and breaks at Lab Talks, and is displayed on communal video screens (Figure 10).
- The policy is also part of the induction process for new staff.
- During our 2023 policy survey, the Authorship Policy that includes the details of when to add a TS as an author or acknowledgment, had the highest increase in awareness of all our policies, from 12% to 42%.
 - <50% awareness is not ideal, but it should be noted that non-scientific research staff are included in this survey, for whom the authorship policy may not have much relevance.

Authorship and Acknowledgement

? Did you know Babraham has an Authorship Policy (BI-RES-001)?


It provides a framework for determining **fair attribution on publications** and boilerplate text to help you:

Correctly **acknowledge the use and funding of our Science Facilities** 

Describe animal husbandry & legal / ethical aspects of **animal experimentation** 

? Did you also know that acknowledging and citing Science Facilities supports their sustainability and the career development of staff working in them?

Babraham recently co-authored a publication on this topic ([Kivinen et al](#), [Embo Reports](#) 2022)

 Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council




Figure 10. Rotating slide at Lab Talks highlighting the existence and benefits of the Authorship Policy

Action 12: Promote training and other personal professional development activities for cohort.

- The SES shows that the TS cohort say that their training needs are being met and shows a positive trend over the past two years.
 - “I am supported and able to take training and career development opportunities”, 88% agree, up 6%
 - “My training needs are being met”, 88% agree, up 2%
 - “I can access support, guidance and mentoring for my development”, 88% agree, up 6%

Qualitative Evidence

Action 6: Increase the participation of the cohort at inter-institute activities.

- RITG is a forum for TS in similar institutional settings to interact and discuss the TC and how to best implement it. It also organises a biennial careers day and awards ceremony. At one of these sessions in 2021 several animal technicians from BI attended and were inspired and encouraged to host their own animal technician focused careers symposium. This has now been held twice, each with 200+ technicians from around the country and is planned to be an annual event ongoing. It received a Technicians Commitment Collaboration award in 2023³. An ongoing benefit of this conference is that it has been organised by different TS members each year and will be again next year. This has provided an ongoing source of training and experience in conference organising for TS (quote 4).

“The conference was everything we hoped it would be, and really put the focus on the valuable work of animal technicians in supporting research and how we can direct and develop our careers.”

Quote 4. Abbie Marley, Animal Technician and co-organiser of the Animal Technician Conference 2022

- Danielle Hoyle spoke at the UK Technical Specialist Network and has developed networks within the TC community.
- Christopher Hall is a member of the UKRI People & Talent Research Technical Specialist subgroup.

Action 12: Promote training and other personal professional development activities for cohort.

- Since 2023 we have had segregated PPD funding available to the TS cohort. This funding is intended to be distinct from technical skills-based ‘on-the-job’ training. The first session was “GREAT Customer Service for Technical Specialists” which focused on the soft skills required when interacting with your end user. Despite organising repeat courses, it was still oversubscribed showing an appetite for further courses which are planned for the next financial year.



IT Technical Specialist Matt decommissioning an old PC

³ <https://www.techniciancommitment.org.uk/2023-technician-commitment-collaboration-fund-winners-announced>

Please provide details of any additional initiatives/programmes/activities aligned to your Technician Commitment that are not covered in your original action plan.

With the support of the HR team, three teams from the TS have developed and implemented a career pathway for their staff: BSU, Computing, and Flow Cytometry. This has provided transparency to the promotion process for these staff and given them the knowledge to be able to attain career progression in the future. 136 promotions of TS and administrative staff have been awarded through these pathways (and a parallel personal promotion scheme) since their implementation. Due to the competitive environment in Cambridge, attracting experienced technical staff can be challenging as we are unable to compete with the salaries and benefits offered by the private sector. One strategy we have deployed across TS departments is called 'Grow Your Own', whereby we advertise jobs across two pay bands and either recruit to the higher if we're able to attract applicants or we put together a defined training plan to upskill the lower banded individual to the requisite level as explained by our Head of Genomics in quote 5.

"During the gap in management I was given the opportunity to perform the role interim manager, during this time I was supported through mentorship and structured help from our Research Operations team. During the transition this help allowed me to elevate myself to position where I was able to run the facility independently and was offered the role. The trust and support given to me as a TS was key to this transition and I feel I may not have been given this opportunity at another institute."

Quote 5. Megan Hamilton, Head of the Genomics Facility since 2023

By engaging with the wider technical community, we have developed extensive networks of collaborators whom we call on for support, advice and collaboration. We are taking tentative steps towards the development of more structured career development plans for staff across the whole institute, not just the TS cohort, and have benefited from constructive conversations to help develop our plans. These include, but are not limited to, Ian Prior (Associate Pro Vice Chancellor, Technology Infrastructure and Environment Directorate at the University of Liverpool) and Ian Hancox (Director of Research Technology and Technical Strategy at the University of Warwick and Co-Director of the Institute of Technical Skills and Strategy) who were influential in developing promotional pathways for technical staff within their organisations.

Awards are a tangible and visible form of recognition for the work of a TS and can help boost their career and self-esteem. The TCSG have been advertising eligible awards to the TS cohort and offering advice on how best to nominate people, or yourself, to win one. Formalisation and expansion of this is in the 36-month action plan (future action 3). Prize winners include: Rachael Walker winning the 2023 Papin Prize for contribution to knowledge exchange, Aimee Paterson (BSU) winning the 2023 Sir Colin Blakemore Memorial Award, Abbie Marley and Jessica Podd (BSU) winning the Outstanding Collaboration Award at the 2023 RITG awards, and Matt Fairbairn (IT) winning the Technical Skills Specialist Award at the 2021 RITG awards (Quote 6).

"It feels brilliant to have won this award. It's wonderful that events like the Research Institute Technician Symposium exist to bring recognition to the technicians from all areas."

Quote 6. Matt Fairbairn, IT Infrastructure Administrator

Successful applications to the BBSRC Flexible Talent Mobility Award (FTMA) have enabled skills exchanges between BI and other organisations, such as universities, institutes, and private companies. This has been well used by the TS cohort with 21 awards resulting in 45 exchanges over two years (some individuals may have benefited more than once, and this figure includes TS at other locations visiting BI). A recent TS highlight of the scheme was the 2024 award of an Innovate UK research grant that was a direct consequence of an FTMA exchange between the business ChromaTwist and the Flow Cytometry Facility at BI in 2021.

BI and Newcastle University have recently been awarded a joint FTMA (2024-2027). The CONNECT FTMA is intended to leverage our collective expertise to support knowledge exchange opportunities focused on the ageing UKRI strategic theme and build high functioning teams to deliver excellent research, staff development, career mobility and cross-sector societal and commercial impact. It has a strong remit to support collaborative training placements for research technicians and technology and skills specialists. There are two work streams focused on: 'Research Technical Professional (RTP) and Professional Enabling Skills (PES) skills development (staff exchanges)' and 'Technician and Early Career Research (ECR) programme (careers)'. The application was co-written by PES and RTP's from both organisations, and the BI TC Institutional Lead sits on the Steering Group which will allocate funding.

BI has two active programmes that are separate from but aligned with the TC: the equity4success (e4s) programme and the Research Access Programme (RAP). The e4s mission supports the idea that *"doing excellent science that everyone can contribute to and benefit from only happens when everyone has equitable opportunities and access to a successful career within science"*. e4s has representation on the TCSG and we have ensured that our next 36-month action plan aligns with their Athena Swan action plan, as many of the goals are the same, such as improving the visibility and career development opportunities of the respective cohorts. e4s ensure that the language used in our written and oral outputs are as inclusive as possible.

The RAP programme provides work placements for students from disadvantaged and underrepresented groups. To date, 12 students have participated, 4 per year, who are embedded into our research groups or Science Facilities for 8 weeks. Two individuals have been directly placed into the TS led core facilities and their stories are available on our blog^{4,5}. Bringing RAP students into the Science Facilities helps sustainability, acting as a talent pipeline into technical roles.

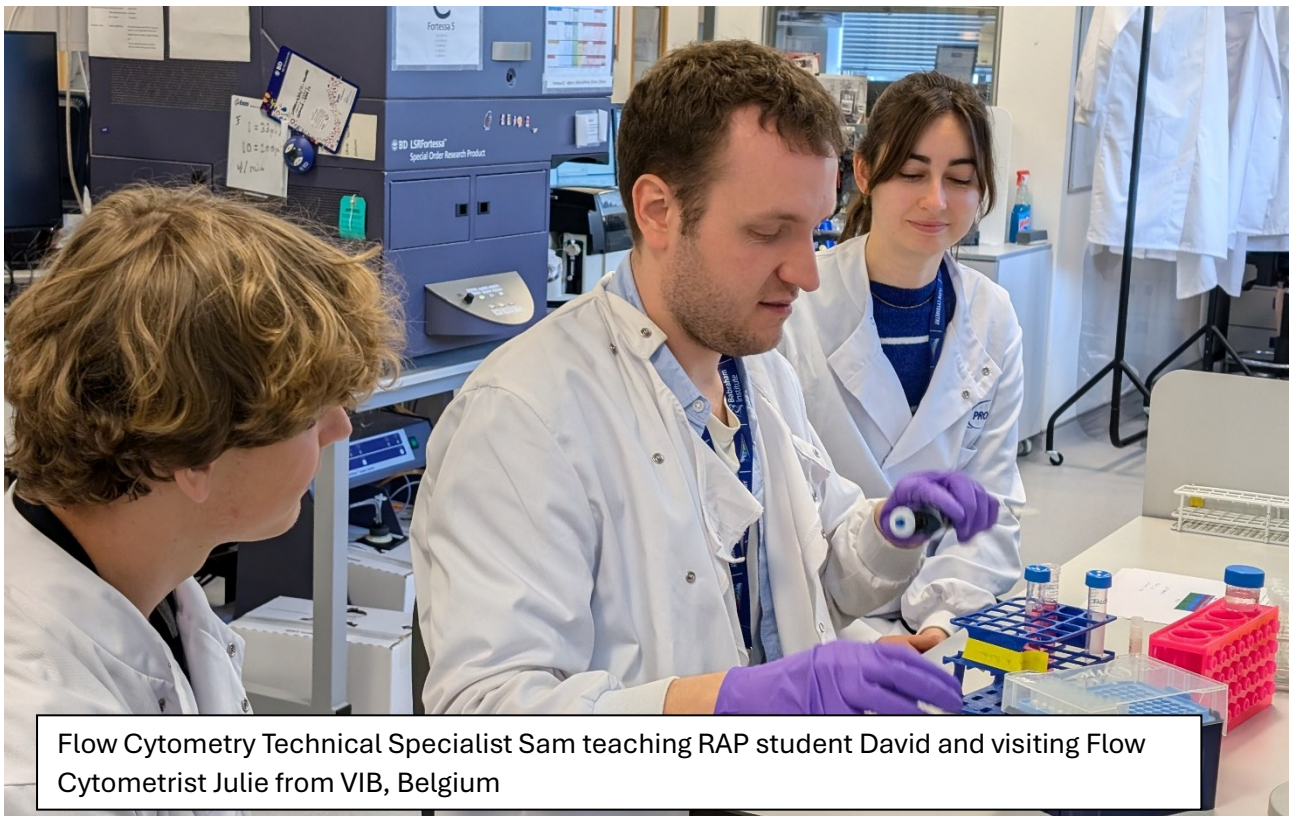
EU-LIFE is an alliance of leading independent research centres in life sciences, advocating for excellent research. The Core Facility Working Group, chaired by BI's Danielle Hoyle, has an established track record of community engagement and advocacy, specifically around developing and sharing best practice. In 2022 they published an article in *EMBO Press*⁶ advocating for greater acknowledgement of core facilities and their staff for the purposes of: the sustainability of core facilities and on their staff careers.

BI sits within the BRC site which comprises of 60+ early-stage biotech companies. An initiative started in 2023 is to foster a greater sense of community between employees across the campus and one of these is a TC networking forum. BI already hosts internal networking forums for the cohort and this has now expanded, with financial support from BRC, to include staff at the other companies on site. These events are opportunities to discuss your role, synergies, and careers and each session has a career talk by a TS.

⁴ [RAP 2021: Teamwork and Independence | Babraham Institute](#)

⁵ [Hanan's story: Research Access Programme 2022 | Babraham Institute](#)

⁶ <https://www.embopress.org/doi/full/10.15252/embr.202255734>



Flow Cytometry Technical Specialist Sam teaching RAP student David and visiting Flow Cytometrist Julie from VIB, Belgium



BSU Technical Specialist Mike loading racks into the robotic handling unit

Please provide a 36-month action plan

This 36-month action plan has been developed as a collaboration between the TCSG and the TS cohort members. We also considered the 2024 action plan produced for our Athena Swan submission, the Institute Assessment Exercise Research Culture Statement (IAE-RCS), and the Roadmap for Team Science (RTS) to ensure horizontal alignment between the four projects. Details of the actions and objectives are shown in Table 3 and they are cross referenced in our future action plan Table 2. The Athena Swan submission also includes an action plan point to implement recommendations in this action plan (3.20 Incorporate actions from Technician Commitment). The TCSG discussed our achievements and difficulties from the last action plan and decided to carry over some of the action plan points. The TCSG then built a “bare bones” action plan and each member met with individuals and groups in their local cohort to discuss these and ask for more suggestions. These were then incorporated into this action plan. The process took approximately four months.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE –

abbreviations and references are found in the tables following the action plan

Table 2. 3-year action plan 2024-2027

Action Plan Number	Theme	Action	Details	Measurable outcome	Responsibility	Synergies with other projects
1	CAREER DEVELOPMENT SUSTAINABILITY	To ensure that all members of the TS cohort have equitable opportunity for career development and progression	<p>Much of the work on Career Development will be conducted as a cross-institute initiative and effect almost all departments. The role of the TSCG is to ensure that the Technician Voice is consulted at all stages.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review whether the cohort feels the benefit of the current career pathways in Computing, BSU, and Flow Cytometry Investigate whether we can establish formal career frameworks for all Technical Specialists Work with HR and external stakeholders (e.g. ITSS Career Pathways Lab) to understand how we can build on existing good practice in areas. Explore the possibility of in-band progression and how to make the process more transparent Reinforce line management training to communicate the existence of the career pathway for IT, Flow Cytometry, and the BSU The TCSG will ensure that the 'technician voice' is heard in the current Team Science Roadmap plans (B4) Establish a baseline metric to measure the impact of any career development initiatives: consider staff retention, promotion, and in-band pay rises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcome of the review of the current pathways, which will inform future actions Positive changes in SES results - 03, 04, 06, 21, 22, and 23 Increase in staff retention within a defined pathway Statistics on promotion, retention for cohorts inside and outside a defined pathway Baseline data to measure the impact of changes 	HR, GLs, BEC, TCSG, Team Managers	AS: 2.6, 2.7, 4.1 IAE-RCS: 2.2, 3.3, 3.7, 4.1, 4.2 RTS: B4
2	CAREER DEVELOPMENT SUSTAINABILITY	Improve access to, and engagement in, Personal and Professional Development (PPD) training opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness of current opportunities through networking events, electronic communication, and seminars Encourage participation in the FTMA and other funded opportunities Run cross cohort PPD training in consultation with group & team leaders and TCSG representatives Measure the uptake of training opportunities, both internally and externally TCSG inclusion in the development of the new HR system Reinforce line management training to encourage PPD training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accurate records of TS PPD participation This will allow us to monitor trends in PPD training opportunities and uptake Creation of new communication channels for TS specific training 	HR, TCSG, GLs, Team Managers	AS: 2.12, 2.13, 2.14 IAE-RCS: 3.4, 4.1 RTS: E2

Action Plan Number	Theme	Action	Details	Measurable outcome	Responsibility	Synergies with other projects
3	RECOGNITION VISIBILITY	Increase the number of nominations and successful outcomes of TS for external and internal prizes or awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Run training courses in impactful writing using ringfenced PPD funds; this will have wider impacts than just award nominations, such as bid writing, email communications, marketing etc Establish an annual process for identifying candidates who should be nominated for prizes to give sufficient preparation time Create a repository of good and bad nominations, possibly in collaboration with other institutes through RITG, to support nomination development Run a 'masterclass' via the RITG to share best practise on nomination writing Record the number of TS nominations and TS awards won This will create a skills base in the TS cohort to support successful award nominations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An increase in the number of nominations and awards won A training resource and repository of good nominations 	HR, TCSG, RITG	RTS: E1, E3
4	VISIBILITY SUSTAINABILITY	Increase TS cohort representation on strategic committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to measure participation in strategic and operational committees Promote TS inclusion in strategic committees - both within the cohort and with management Improve communication of decisions being made in strategic committees to the TS cohort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TS committee membership comparison with 2019 and 2023 	TCSG, BEC	AS: 2.2, 2.3 IAE-RCS: 3.1, 3.3 RTS: B6
5	SUSTAINABILITY	Support TS returning from career breaks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Athena Swan strategic initiative to explore Daphne Jackson Fellowships for TS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linked to Athena Swan outcomes point 1.4, and 1.5 	HR, E4S	AS 1.4, 1.5 RTS: B4, E2
6	SUSTAINABILITY CAREER DEVELOPMENT	Ensure robust data collection to inform decisions on the TS cohort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify which datasets are required to demonstrate impact of the Technician Commitment to internal and external stakeholders Establish mechanisms for data collection and analysis on a regular basis Track TS cohort through HR system for retention, promotions, EDI, and training Work with external stakeholders such as the ITSS Careers Pathways Lab and RITG to understand what our baseline data means in the wider context to inform future actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a data dashboard to measure TS metrics over time 	TCSG, HR, E4S	AS: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 2.13 RTS: B3, B5

7	RECOGNITION	Continue to measure acknowledgment data and measure the impact of any amendments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure the impact of July 2024 changes to the Authorship Policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Name changed to Authorship and Acknowledgement Policy ○ Additional content to encourage authors to consider the entire life of the paper, not just the data that resulted in the published work ○ Part of our Team Science Roadmap discussions • Establish best practice on how to measure teams and individuals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of the acknowledgment database and dashboard 	Information Management Librarian, HoRO, RI-SG, BI-4S	RTS: B3, B5, E1, E3
8	VISIBILITY SUSTAINABILITY	Encourage the solicitation of feedback and increase engagement between internal and external TS groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage solicitation of feedback by positive advertising throughout site such as message board messages, leaflets, and posters around site • The TCSG should engage with their cohorts to identify barriers to participation and use this to inform future activities • Continue to conduct networking sessions across the institute and campus • Expand engagement beyond the campus into the greater Cambridge area and through the RITG network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in attendance of the networking sessions • Feedback survey of networking activities • Positive changes in SES results - 08, 24, 25, 26, and 60 	TCSG, BRCL, RITG, HoRO,	AS: 3.16, 4.10 IAE-RCS: 3.1, 4.3 RTS: E1, E3
9	SUSTAINABILITY CAREER DEVELOPMENT	Expand the mentorship scheme to include TS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the current mentorship scheme for Post Docs and PhD students to the TS cohort • Encourage Technical Specialists to participate on the Campus Mentoring scheme • Work with existing networks (RITG, FTMA, other BBSRC Institutes, local Cambridge networks) to identify new opportunities to participate in mentoring activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record the number of mentorships • Record career progression of TS in the mentorship program 	HR, TCSG, BRCL	AS: 2.1, 2.9 IAE-RCS: 4.1, 4.3 RTS: E2
10	RECOGNITION	Ensure the TS voice is heard in setting up the next stage of the reward and recognition hub	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in initial development discussions and feedback to TS • Raise feedback to HR during the development process • Explore how to distribute "thanks" across teams • Include TS metrics recognition metrics in data collection exercises (Action 6) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activation of the system • Positive trend in the number of "thank you" messages 	HR, TCSG	IAE-RCS: 3.3 RTS: E1, E3
11	RECOGNITION CAREER DEVELOPMENT	Promote the benefits of being affiliated with a professional body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create intranet page for professional registration information • Promote informative events regarding professional registration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in the number of professional registrations 	TCSG, HR	AS: 2.5
12	SUSTAINABILITY	Explore how we can support T-level placements and apprentices to fill junior TS roles in facilities, to support the pipeline of TS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with HR to explore if it is feasible to take on apprentices at the Institute • Contact UKRI and BBSRC to identify sources of funding • Contact other BBSRC Institutes to assess other apprentice schemes and find areas where we can work together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a T-level / apprenticeship strategy • Hosted placements in TS roles 	HR, BEC, TCSG, Team Managers	IAE-RCS: 3.4, 4.3

13	CAREER DEVELOPMENT SUSTAINIBILITY VISIBILITY RECOGNITION	Ensure action plan is implemented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annually evaluate progress of action plan at TCSG meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perform a full RAG analysis of action plan in 2027 	TCSG	N/A
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Table 3. Detail of complementary initiatives and actions ongoing at the Babraham Institute

Initiative	Action	Detailed actions and / or objectives
RTS	B3	Organisational systems review to identify best-fit solutions for efficiency and effectiveness
RTS	B4	Clear promotion processes and career development guide for staff and line managers
RTS	B5	Central data repository for information and reporting and assessing other teams information
RTS	B6	Review and implement transparency of decision making; faster and regular comms to staff.
RTS	E1	Identify and implement standard approaches to acknowledge and recognise teams and individuals involved in delivering a piece of work
RTS	E2	Clarify, promote and deliver training opportunities effectively and efficiently and empower leaders to support their staff accordingly.
RTS	E3	Increase internal understanding of what Babraham Institute does, why it is important and what the teams are involved in delivering our work
AS	1.1	Collect destinations of academic leavers: PhD students, postdocs, research assistants, GLs, HoFs
AS	1.2	Monitor if staff plan to leave academia
AS	1.3	Leverage exit interview information to understand reasons for leaving academia (see also 4.1)
AS	1.4	Investigate the experiences of researchers who join BI after being out of academic research for at least two years
AS	2.1	Amend appraisal forms to include separate section on citizenship
AS	2.2	Review and streamline committee structure to reduce burden and ensure they appropriately add value
AS	2.3	Include more junior staff on decision making committees to reduce burden on a few individuals, especially on senior women
AS	2.5	Provide practical advice on networking, collaborating and sponsorship
AS	2.6	Make information on career progression/promotion easier to find
AS	2.7	Create career frameworks to ensure clear and transparent role requirements and steps needed for progression
AS	2.9	Expand mentoring programme for postdocs and offer to other groups
AS	2.13	Monitor internal grant funding distribution
AS	2.14	Review and update recruitment strategy to ensure we are recruiting from a diverse and representative pool
AS	2.15	Enhance interview skills of staff to facilitate fair and unbiased recruitment
AS	3.16	Create a staff forum
AS	3.20	Incorporate actions from Technician Commitment
AS	4.1	Leverage exit interview information to understand what support is beneficial and what is lacking
AS	4.10	Create staff networks
IAE-RCS	2.1	Recruitment practices and policies to underpin workforce excellence and diversity
IAE-RCS	2.2	Analyse and identify skills gaps
IAE-RCS	3.1	Working environment that promotes excellence, inclusivity and wellbeing
IAE-RCS	3.3	Recognise and reward all academic and professional services staff and students
IAE-RCS	3.4	Develop opportunities for different career pathways for all staff and students
IAE-RCS	3.7	Deliver other relevant activities: Technicians Commitment, Research Integrity and Sustainability
IAE-RCS	4.1	Embed Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for all staff and students
IAE-RCS	4.2	Support the development of institutional leaders
IAE-RCS	4.3	Train the next generation of researchers, technical specialists, entrepreneurs and innovators

Table 4. Staff Engagement Survey (SES) action plan relevant questions

Number	Question
3	I have access to the information I need to do my job well
4	I am clear on what I need to achieve in my role
6	I feel valued (for the work I do) by my colleagues across the Institute
8	Communication from members of the Institute's Senior Leadership Team is open and honest
21	Working at the Institute will help me to achieve my career aspirations
22	Achievements are celebrated in the Institute
23	Promotion processes are open and transparent
24	I have sufficient input into work related decisions that affect me, where appropriate
25	When I put forward my views, I feel they are listened to
26	We are free to speak openly, within the Institute, even when our opinions are different
60	Citizenship work is recognised and valued

Table 5. Abbreviations used throughout the application

AS	Athena Swan
BBSRC	Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council
BRC	Babraham Research Campus
BRCL	Babraham Research Campus Limited (responsible for the management of the BRC)
BEC	Babraham Executive Committee
BI-4S	BI Senior Scientific and Support Staff Forum
EDI	Equity diversity inclusion
E4S	Equity for science
FTMA	Flexible Talent Mobility Account
GLs	Group Leaders
HR	Human Resources
HoRO	Head of Research Operations
IAE RCS	Institute Assessment Exercise Research Culture Statement
ICC	Institute Culture Consultation
IDG	Institute Development Grant
PPD	Personal Professional Development
RISG	Research Integrity Steering Group
RITG	Research Institute Technician Group
RTS	Roadmap for Team Science
SES	Staff engagement survey
TS	Technical specialist
TCSG	Technician Commitment Steering Group
UKRI	UK Research and Innovation

Please confirm that your Technician Commitment status and 3-year action plan is published on your organisation's website and provide the relevant URL here:

<https://www.babraham.ac.uk/work-and-study/technician-commitment>



Attendance at one of the Technical Specialist led conferences



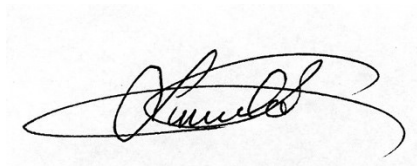
Stores Technical Specialists Richard and Greg delivering boxes to the labs



Christopher Hall

Technician Commitment Nominated Institutional Lead

Date: 30 July 2024



Simon Cook

Technician Commitment Signatory – Leader of Institution

Date: 30 July 2024