

STEM Laboratory Facilities Publication Policy – Fair Attribution of Technical Staff Contributions to Research

Background & Purpose

The scientific community is moving towards creating a more collaborative and inclusive research landscape. This includes ensuring the fair attribution of work of technical staff in scientific outputs. At the OU this is reflected in the [Research Code of Practice](#) (section 8). The STEM Laboratory Facilities Publication Policy acts to provide further detail on the fair attribution of technical staff.

The OU recognises that technical staff provide researchers and external customers with expertise and knowledge that is essential for creating high-quality results and data for research and publications, and that they can:

- Be experts in their field
- Use advanced techniques and state-of-the-art instrumentation
- Have an essential role from idea conception to conducting experiments on specialist equipment
- Perform data analysis and interpretation

Historically, in the scientific community, technical staff have not always been included in discussions around authorship and their contributions to publications. This means their essential and specialised skills are not recognised in a formal way, and their work may be “invisible”. Fairly attributing work to technicians does not detract from the work of other contributors; it creates an inclusive working environment, where all contributions are recognised and valued.

Benefits

Including technical staff as co-authors or acknowledging their contributions in publications is beneficial for the individual as well as the STEM Faculty and University.

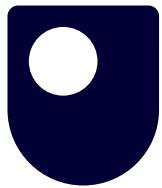
On an individual level, being a co-author or receiving an acknowledgment provides visibility and recognition for technical staff work, which are two of the key pillars of the [Technician Commitment](#). It can also be used as evidence for Continual Professional Development if individuals are [Professionally Registered](#). Furthermore, it can be used to guide career development discussions during appraisals and provide evidence for prior research experience, for example, if staff are looking for a new role or consider doing further postgraduate qualifications.

On an institutional level, recognising the contribution and support that technical staff provide is also valuable as evidence for the OU's strategy to [support research](#) and enable impact, which is also part of the REF 2028 "People, Culture and Environment" statement. The [STEM laboratory facilities](#) are run by highly skilled experts; acknowledging their contributions accurately strengthens the professional reputation of our laboratory facilities and technical staff. This, in turn, delivers financial benefits to the STEM faculty, as research excellence centres and providers of high-quality, state-of-the-art facilities and services are more likely to attract external funding and commercial partnerships. The credibility of these facilities is further reinforced by the volume and quality of peer-reviewed publications they generate, offering objective validation of their excellence beyond internal claims and thus attracts a wider range of customers.

Fair attribution

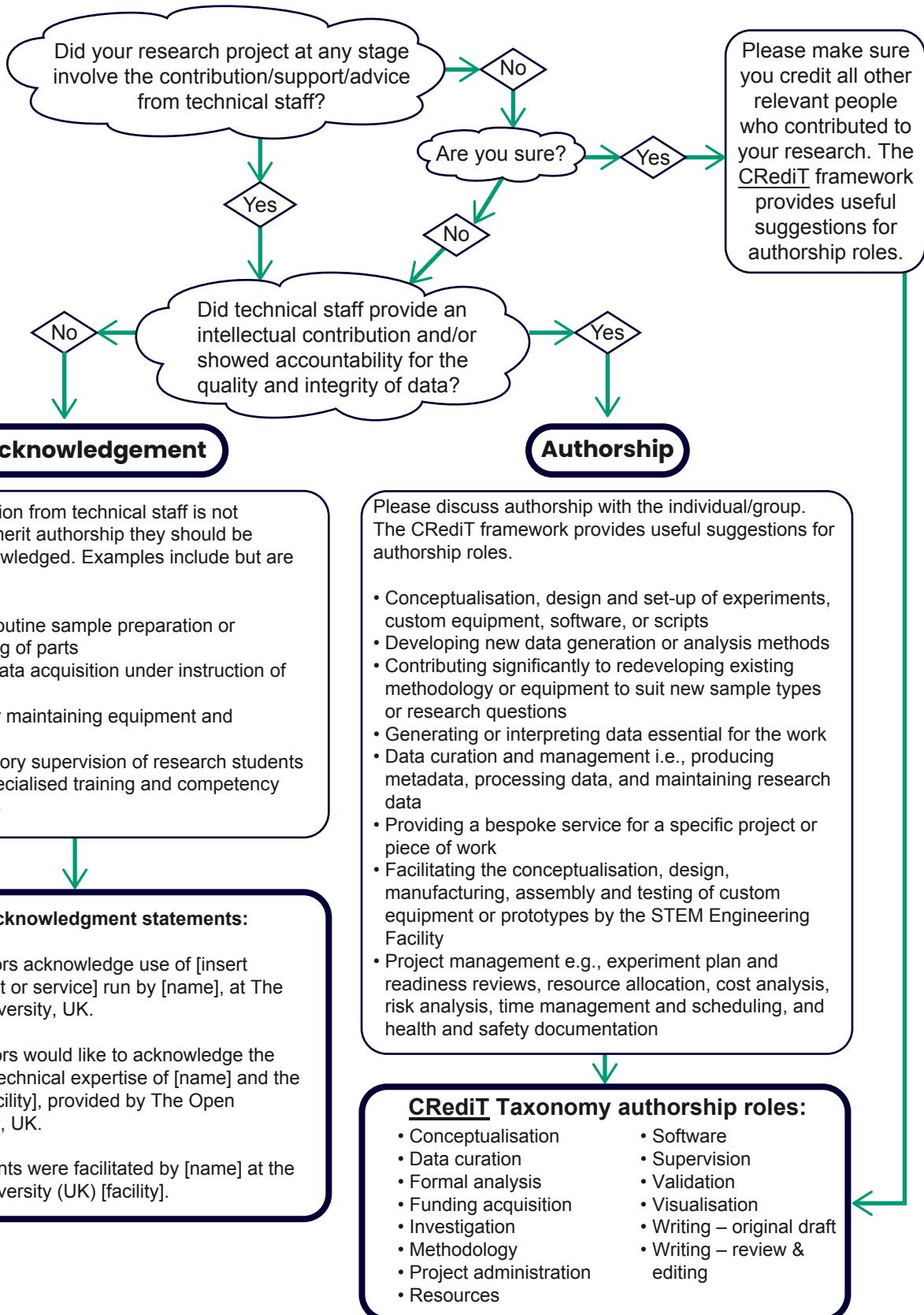
The appropriate type of recognition varies depending on the technical staff's contribution. It is encouraged to have open and continual conversations about potential authorship early on and throughout any project. The [CRediT](#) (Contributor Roles Taxonomy) framework provides a

useful resource for suggested contributor role definitions (detailed in the flow chart below) to help make decisions on acknowledgement and authorship. Through this, authors are encouraged to add contributor information statements alongside traditional attributions into their manuscripts. Furthermore [COPE](#) (Committee on Publication Ethics) provides abundance information and resources around ethical publishing.



Fair Attribution of Technical Staff in Research Outputs

The Open University



I confirm that I have read, and have understood, the STEM Technical Staff Fair Attribution Policy, and agree to abide by it in future publications resulting from my collaborative efforts with the STEM laboratory facilities & technical staff

Name:

Signature:

Date: