



Awards 2025

Outstanding Technician of the Year

Institution Name	Alex Laude, <i>Newcastle University</i>
Submission title or project name	Reinventing multi-user equipment procurement strategy for the research technical professional (RTP) community
Nominee / key personnel	Dr Alex Laude (director of scientific facilities, Faculty of Medical Sciences, Newcastle University)
URL	
Submission	Alex Laude has served as director of faculty research facilities, where he transformed our approach to multi-user equipment funding by developing a triage methodology centred on research technical professionals (RTPs). His model, grounded in technical expertise and knowledge of the UK Research and Innovation funding landscape, has been widely adopted across faculties. A champion of RTP inclusion, Dr Laude empowers technical staff to co-develop funding bids, resulting in RTPs leading 80 per cent of recent proposals and securing £3.6 million across two major bids. His collaborative model has led to £6 million in total equipment investment with a high success rate (eight of 11 bids funded). Dr Laude's leadership not only strengthens research sustainability but also ensures that RTPs are recognised as key contributors. His impact has led to invitations to review panels for Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council and Medical Research Council funding.



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Outstanding Technician of the Year

Institution Name	Joe Rees-Jones, <i>University of York</i>
Submission title or project name	Outstanding Technician of the Year
Nominee / key personnel	Joe Rees-Jones (research technician in the School of Physics, Engineering and Technology, University of York)
URL	
Submission	Joe Rees-Jones is research technician in the School of Physics, Engineering and Technology at the University of York. His specialist skills and knowledge of immersive technologies underpin a plethora of activities to deliver new approaches, techniques and experiences across research, teaching and creative practice. Dr Rees-Jones' technical expertise, diligence and down-to-earth approach enable the highest quality teaching, research and knowledge transfer. This is reflected in the creative outputs of the students, researchers and businesses that flourish under his guidance and support. It is also reflected in the university's immersive technology research and development facilities, which have been meticulously designed as spaces to accelerate research excellence and innovation in creative practice.



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Outstanding Technician of the Year

Institution Name	John Nicolson, <i>University of Cambridge</i>
Submission title or project name	Raising the profile of technicians through advocacy and collaboration
Nominee / key personnel	John Nicolson
URL	https://www.hr.admin.cam.ac.uk/news/highlights-technicians-conference-2024
Submission	John Nicolson has been a driving force behind the development, recognition and empowerment of technicians at the University of Cambridge and across the UK higher education sector. As technician development adviser in HR, he has led national initiatives on professional registration, mentoring, career frameworks and workforce planning. Mr Nicolson's work has supported strategic change, increased technician visibility and built a strong culture of collaboration. He co-founded a cross-institutional mentoring scheme, contributed to national succession planning and role-mapping tools, and co-authored an international publication connecting UK and Argentinian technicians. Respected for his inclusive leadership and sector-wide influence, Mr Nicolson was awarded a Professional Services Recognition Award in 2023. Although modest in style, he has had a long-term impact that has opened doors for countless others – making him an outstanding advocate for the technical community.



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Outstanding Technician of the Year

Institution Name	Kate Robinson, <i>Harper Adams University</i>
Submission title or project name	Kate Robinson: outstanding farm technician
Nominee / key personnel	
URL	
Submission	Kate Robinson has demonstrated exceptional commitment and leadership in ruminant science throughout her lifelong agricultural career. From farm beginnings to a key role at a leading UK agricultural university, she has significantly improved animal welfare, data accuracy and operational efficiency. Under her leadership, her team won the prestigious RABDF/NMR Gold Cup – an unprecedented university achievement. Ms Robinson fosters a collaborative, inclusive environment, mentoring students and fellow technicians, many of whom have secured permanent roles. She has introduced innovations that reduce animal stress and streamline husbandry and data management, reflecting her deep expertise. Beyond her daily work, Ms Robinson actively supports the Technician Commitment, encouraging professional development and strengthening the technician community at Harper Adams University's Future Farm. She effectively represents technician perspectives in strategic decision-making, bridging gaps between technical, academic and leadership teams. Her technical skill, leadership and dedication to teaching, research and community make her an outstanding candidate for this award.



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Outstanding Technician of the Year

Institution Name	Phil Chaplain, <i>Robert Gordon University</i>
Submission title or project name	Phil Chaplain – from computer simulation to field testing
Nominee / key personnel	Phil Chaplain
URL	https://www.netzerotc.com/insights/a-journey-of-collaboration-super-compact-multi-phase-separator/
Submission	Phil Chaplain, senior technician at Robert Gordon University, designed and built a £100,000 bespoke flow-loop for testing the BSC Turbo Separator, an innovative device set to transform offshore oil operations by separating oil from produced water at unprecedented efficiency. His commitment ensured that the complex system was delivered ahead of schedule, enabling successful performance testing with major industry partners. Beyond his technical achievement, Mr Chaplain supported data analysis, developed safety protocols and played a key role in showcasing the technology to global stakeholders. He also recently built a geothermal cooling system to support RGU's international research in Kenya aimed at improving housing conditions for low-income communities. As a respected leader, Mr Chaplain champions collaboration between technicians, researchers and students. He sits on institutional research committees and the REF 2029 panel, driving strategic decisions and lab innovations. Currently, he is leading efforts to establish a dedicated Hydrogen Laboratory, further strengthening RGU's research infrastructure.



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Outstanding Technician of the Year

Institution Name	Helena Brown, <i>University of Leeds</i>
Submission title or project name	Helena Brown nomination
Nominee / key personnel	Helena Brown – lead technician for Sorby Environmental Fluid Dynamics Laboratory
URL	
Submission	Helena Brown is a dedicated technical specialist in particle sizing at the University of Leeds who works with diverse community groups to improve environmental practices. Uniquely, her exceptional technical expertise is matched by her passion for, and achievements in, improving outreach and widening participation. As co-lead for equality and inclusion in the School of Earth and Environment, Ms Brown initiated and delivered successful programmes, including The School Fieldwork Fund, which continues to benefit students from disadvantaged backgrounds. She leads outreach with disadvantaged school children, encouraging engagement with further education and STEM careers. Ms Brown collaborated with colleagues on groundbreaking projects to promote and encourage safer LGBTQ+ fieldwork, resulting in co-authorship of a <i>Nature Geoscience</i> article. As an active member of the technical community on school-, faculty-, institutional- and now national-level committees, Ms Brown represents technicians' interests in Technician Commitment activities and in directing scalable, impactful change in equality, diversity and inclusion, outreach and widening participation across the broader sector.



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Institution Name	Linda Lightley, <i>Northumbria University</i>
Submission title or project name	Building sustainable futures through biodesign at Northumbria University
Nominee / key personnel	Linda Lightley (scientific officer in fashion)
URL	
Submission	Linda Lightley, scientific officer at Northumbria University's School of Design, has been instrumental in establishing the BioDesign Lab – one of the UK's few facilities dedicated to sustainable material innovation. Retraining from a fashion background, she independently developed the lab, enabling safe, hands-on research with biological materials such as mycelium and bacterial cellulose. Ms Lightley played a key technical role in the £100,000 Bio-Couture project, helping develop a life-cycle assessment framework for bio-based fashion materials. Her rapid problem-solving and technical expertise have driven research momentum and success. She fosters collaboration across departments and mentors students in real-world innovation, including leading teams in the international BioDesign Challenge. She also champions technician representation in faculty discussions on sustainability and innovation strategy. Ms Lightley's entrepreneurial leadership, cross-disciplinary impact and commitment to student development embody the Technician Commitment. Her work has significantly advanced experimental sustainable design in the north-east.



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Outstanding Technician of the Year

Institution Name	Jiteen Ahmed, <i>Aston University</i>
Submission title or project name	Jiteen Ahmed – a transformational leader in technical services
Nominee / key personnel	Jiteen Ahmed, head of technical services in health and life sciences at Aston University
URL	
Submission	Jiteen Ahmed, head of technical services in health and life sciences at Aston University, has made an essential and lasting contribution to institutional success, and his leadership has been both transformational and nationally significant. He led the redevelopment of a pharmacy lab, from funding bid to delivery, creating an inclusive, sustainable, technically outstanding space, now shortlisted for two Constructing Excellence Awards. His leadership is a testament to the vibrant and cohesive research culture across various activities, including a £1.5 million Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council grant (co-applicant), granted patent and joint authorship of research articles. He works across departments (estates, finance and digital) to align technical services with academic and student needs, fostering a collaborative, high-performing environment. He has restructured Aston's technical workforce to create clear career pathways, driving visibility, opportunity and efficiency. A national advocate, he serves on the Midlands Innovation TALENT Commission and chairs the Southern Universities Purchasing Consortium. At Aston, he was elected to senate to represent professional services, amplifying technician voices in decision-making.