

## **General Technical Services**

### **Background**

When calculating the full Economic Cost (fEC) of a research project, the Principal Investigator will need to estimate the resources required to carry out the research project and cost these in an appropriate way. A key resource that is required in Laboratory-based Schools is the use of Technicians.

Research projects vary in the level of technician resource they require. Some projects may require a technician to be dedicated to the project (full-time). Other projects will require a share of the time of a technician who is part of a pool of technicians available in the School. These are examples of instances where technicians are *directly* involved on the research project (e.g., setting up experiments, assisting the PI to carry out experiments, review results etc).

However, not all of the work of Research Pool Technicians is direct involvement on research projects. Surveys have shown that a substantial amount of technician time is spent on *support* duties relating to research. This includes Health & Safety, Equipment Maintenance, Glassware, and Administration/Supervision.

In the past, this resource (called 'General Technical Services') was assumed to be covered within the indirect cost element on a research project. However, under fEC it is good practice to identify this cost separately and charge it as a direct cost to all Laboratory based projects in the School. This will ensure that the cost is properly recovered in the relevant schools.

### **Costing Direct Technician time**

Calculating the cost of technicians directly involved on research projects will be done under fEC in the same way as now:

Dedicated Technicians – ask Finance for salary costing and apply % required. This will be classed as a Directly Incurred cost.

Pool Technicians – estimate number of days required and apply appropriate daily rate band for grade of staff. This is a Directly Allocated Cost.

### **Costing General Technical Services**

This is a general resource and is not directly related to the project. It is important that the cost of this resource is identified by the School and is charged in a fair and reasonable way to research projects in the School. The most sensible approach is to charge a £ per Academic Staff FTE in the same way that Estates and Indirect costs are costed

## Why the Need to include General Technical Services in addition to Direct Technician time?

A survey was carried out in the School of Engineering in November 2004. The survey involved asking technicians a series of questions about how their time is deployed. The results were as follows:

	<b>Total %</b>	<b>Research %</b>
<b>Health &amp; Safety</b>	9	5
<b>Supervision</b>	4	1
<b>General Admin</b>	9	5
<b>Laboratories, Research</b>	31	26
<b>Laboratories, Teaching</b>	22	0
<b>Facility Management</b>	8	4
<b>Equipment Management</b>	12	7
<b>Other</b>	4	3
<b>Total</b>	100	53

The data show that **53%** of the average Engineering technician's time is spent supporting research projects. However, **only 26%** of their time involves direct involvement with research projects in laboratories. The rest (**27%**) is spent on a number of support tasks such as Health & Safety and Equipment Management.

The total value of Technicians costs in the 2005/06 Budget for School X is approx £1.9M. Based on the results of the Engineering Survey it can be said that £513K is General Technical Services.

The estimated technician recovery in 2005/06 from research projects is £375K. This illustrates that the School is currently only recovering (roughly) the cost of direct technician time. The £513K for general technical services is assumed to be recovered from Indirect costs.

Under fEC, we are proposing that this amount should be charged to research projects as a direct cost to ensure that it is fully recovered. The Research Councils have accepted this and established this as a specific category of cost under the Directly Allocated heading. Peer Review have been instructed to not query this cost and to only query the cost of any direct technician time on the project.

## **Suggested Approach – School X Example**

Cost of General Support Technicians 0506 estimated to be £513K.

Total Academic FTE 206 (see below)

Charge per Academic FTE  $\text{£}513\text{K} / 206 = \text{£}2490$ .

This amount should be added to research project costs in the same way that Indirect and Estates costs are applied to FTE.

For example, if a research project requires the following resources:

Principal Investigator 0.2 FTE per year x 3 years

Research Fellow 1.0 FTE per year x 3 years

The General Technical Services cost would be:

$0.2 \text{ FTE} + 1.0 \text{ FTE} = 1.2 \text{ FTE} \times 3 \text{ years} = 3.6\text{FTE}$

$3.6 \text{ FTE} \times \text{£}2490 = \text{£}8964$ .

This amount would be included on projects as standard. In addition, any direct technician time required e.g., dedicated technician and/or pool technicians would be included in addition to this.

This charge would be made to research projects irrespective of whether a direct technician is included or not.

### ❖ FTE calculation from TRAC data

Core staff	52.09 (0.37 per TA return)
Research staff	129.38
Students	24.90 (weighted at 0.1 FTE)
Total	206.37

