Scottish Research Technicians' Professional (SRTP) Academy Evaluation and Recommendations

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1. Executive Summary

The Scottish Research Technicians' Professional (SRTP) Academy was a cross-institutional initiative delivered by the Universities of Glasgow, Edinburgh, and St Andrews to strengthen leadership capability, professional development, networking, and recognition among Research Technical Professionals (RTPs).

The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach combining participation data, surveys, interviews, qualitative thematic analysis, and case studies to assess programme reach and impact. A total of 154 eligible participants registered for the Academy, with engagement strongest at the University of Glasgow. Participants represented a diverse range of technical roles, career stages, and backgrounds.

The findings showed that the Academy produced positive results in leadership confidence, professional identity, networking, collaboration, and peer support. Participants especially appreciated the chances for networking across institutions and engaging in professional development activities not available at their own institutions. Qualitative results indicated reduced feelings of isolation, increased confidence, stronger peer networks, and a greater willingness to contribute to institutional change and mentoring.

The Academy seemed to be most effective in building leadership skills and community. The impacts related to project management and grant writing were more limited, suggesting these areas might need longer-term or more focused support.

Time constraints were the main barrier to participation. However, participants generally found the programme accessible, relevant, and highly valuable. Overall, the findings highlight the potential benefits of RTP-focused leadership and networking programmes in aiding professional development, enhancing research culture, and improving the visibility and recognition of Research Technical Professionals in the sector.

The SRTP Academy successfully boosted leadership confidence, professional development, networking, and collaboration among Research Technical Professionals at the partner universities.

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2. Introduction

The Scottish Research Technicians’ Professional (SRTP) Academy was a collaborative initiative delivered across the Universities of Glasgow, Edinburgh, and St Andrews. The programme was designed to strengthen professional recognition, leadership capability, career development, and cross-institutional collaboration for Research Technical Professionals (RTPs).

For the purpose of this evaluation, RTPs are defined as technical specialists whose work is embedded in, or directly supports, research activity. They are technicians with a research focus who provide advanced, discipline-specific expertise that enables the design, delivery, analysis, and dissemination of research across a wide range of fields. In alignment with the Technician Commitment, RTPs are recognised in this evaluation as integral contributors to research, whose roles combine technical expertise with active support for research processes, and whose contributions are important for research quality, continuity, and innovation.

RTPs play a key role in the research ecosystem, but they often face challenges linked to limited visibility, unclear career paths, inconsistent recognition, and unequal access to development opportunities and professional networks. The SRTP Academy was created to address these issues and closely aligned with broader sector priorities, including the implementation of the Technician Commitment and broader efforts to improve research culture and technical career development across the sector.

Through a programme of networking, leadership development, mentoring, peer support, and collaborative learning activities, the Academy aimed to create opportunities for RTPs to strengthen leadership capability, develop project management and grant writing skills, increase professional confidence, and build sustainable peer networks across institutions. Alongside individual development, the programme sought to improve visibility and recognition of technical professionals within institutional research environments and contribute to a more inclusive and collaborative research culture.

This evaluation assesses the effectiveness, reach, and impact of the SRTP Academy at the conclusion of the programme. The evaluation combines quantitative and qualitative evidence to explore participant experiences, programme outcomes, and broader institutional and cultural impacts. The findings are intended to support institutional learning, identify lessons for future delivery, and generate evidence to inform sustainability and potential scaling of the Academy model across the sector.

3. Theory of Change

The SRTP Academy was designed to address systemic barriers affecting Research Technical Professionals, including limited recognition, fragmented professional networks, inconsistent development opportunities, and restricted visibility within research leadership structures.

The programme theory of change proposed that bringing together cross-institutional networking, leadership development, mentoring, collaboration opportunities, and professional support would strengthen leadership capability among RTPs. In turn, this would contribute to stronger institutional recognition of technical expertise and support longer-term improvements in research environments and technical career development.

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes and Intended Impact
£49,291 funding allocation	Scoping and community mapping activity	Technician database and mapping outputs	Improved understanding and visibility of the RTP community
Programme leadership and coordination	Leadership development workshops and training	Delivery of structured Academy activities	Increased leadership confidence, project management, and grant writing capability
Institutional partnerships across Glasgow, Edinburgh, and St Andrews	Networking and peer-learning events	Participation and attendance across activities	Stronger peer networks, collaboration, and sense of community

Technical managers, HR, and stakeholder expertise	Mentoring and peer-support opportunities	Mentoring relationships and cross-institutional connections	Increased collaboration, mentoring behaviours, and professional support
Participant engagement and programme participation	Surveys, interviews, participation monitoring, and evaluation activities	Evaluation findings and impact evidence	Evidence to support institutional learning, sustainability, and future scaling
Online platforms and shared resources	Knowledge sharing and collaborative activities	Online resources and network development	Increased awareness of opportunities, resources, and professional development pathways

The intended longer-term impact of the Academy was to contribute to a more inclusive and collaborative research environment in which technical professionals are recognised as integral contributors to research leadership, innovation, and delivery.

4. Evaluation Framework

The evaluation framework was designed to:

- Assess whether the SRTP Academy achieved its intended outcomes
- Measure changes in leadership capability, collaboration, confidence, and recognition
- Capture evidence of behavioural, institutional, and cultural change
- Identify barriers and enabling factors affecting participation and engagement
- Explore wider impacts on teams and working environments
- Generate evidence to support sustainability, institutional learning, and future scaling

The evaluation examined the SRTP Academy across four key areas:

Programme Delivery and Relevance: The extent to which activities were successfully delivered, participants engaged with programme activities, and RTPs considered the content relevant and accessible to their professional needs.

Participant Impact: The extent to which participation contributed to changes in leadership confidence, professional development, collaboration, networking, and recognition.

Institutional Impact: The extent to which the programme influenced institutional visibility of RTPs, professional development practice, and alignment with priorities such as the Technician Commitment.

Policy and Sector Relevance: The extent to which findings and learning could inform institutional policy, technical career development, and wider sector practice.

Outcomes, Indicators, and Data Sources

Outcome	Indicators	Data Sources
Increased leadership capability and professional confidence	Increased leadership, project management, and grant writing skills; greater confidence engaging in opportunities and taking on new responsibilities	Registration survey, participant impact surveys, interviews
Stronger peer networks and community	Increased sense of community, collaboration, and peer support	Participant surveys, participation and engagement data, interviews
Improved access to opportunities and development	Participation in Academy activities and access to opportunities unavailable locally	Participation records, surveys, interviews
Increased collaboration and leadership behaviours	Participants applying for funding, mentoring others, initiating collaborations, and taking on leadership responsibilities	Surveys, interviews, case studies
Improved recognition and institutional influence	Increased visibility of technical professionals and evidence of institutional or cultural change	Case studies, qualitative feedback, guidance documents
Broader team and organisational impact	Reported changes in team behaviours, collaboration, visibility, or working practices linked to participant involvement	Team impact survey, qualitative feedback

5. Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation adopted a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative evidence to assess programme reach, effectiveness, and impact.

The evaluation began with a review of programme documentation and monitoring data, including attendance records, activity feedback, facilitator reflections, programme materials, and institutional documentation related to technician development and the Technician Commitment.

Participant demographic and background information collected through the initial registration survey were used, where appropriate and ethically collected, to understand the profile and diversity of participants engaging with the programme.

Primary evaluation data collection included participant impact surveys, qualitative interviews, focus groups, and case studies. Surveys explored participant motivations, engagement, experiences, and perceived outcomes, including changes in leadership capability, professional confidence, collaboration, networking, visibility, and access to opportunities.

Participation and engagement across Academy activities were analysed to understand patterns of engagement and potential barriers to involvement. Analysis considered institution, technical role, career stage, and other relevant participant characteristics where appropriate.

Qualitative data were analysed using thematic coding approaches to identify recurring themes, patterns, and experiences across data sources. Quantitative and qualitative findings were triangulated to strengthen validity and support robust conclusions.

In addition to participant feedback, a separate team impact survey was developed to capture broader behavioural and organisational impacts among colleagues and teams working alongside participants. This element of the evaluation was designed to explore perceived changes in collaboration, leadership behaviours, visibility, and team practices associated with participation in the Academy. A very low response rate (n=3) inhibited the application of the outcomes as indicators, and accordingly the outputs of the survey have not been included in this evaluation.

To complement the quantitative evidence, qualitative case studies were developed with participants from different institutions and technical disciplines. Through interviews and reflective accounts, the case studies explored experiences of leadership development, collaboration, professional confidence, networking, and institutional influence. These case studies also provided illustrative examples of individual and organisational change emerging from participation in the Academy.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion considerations were embedded throughout the evaluation process. Evaluation materials and engagement approaches were designed to support inclusive participation. Demographic data were anonymised and reported in aggregate form where appropriate, and case study selection sought to reflect diversity across institutions, career stages, and technical disciplines.

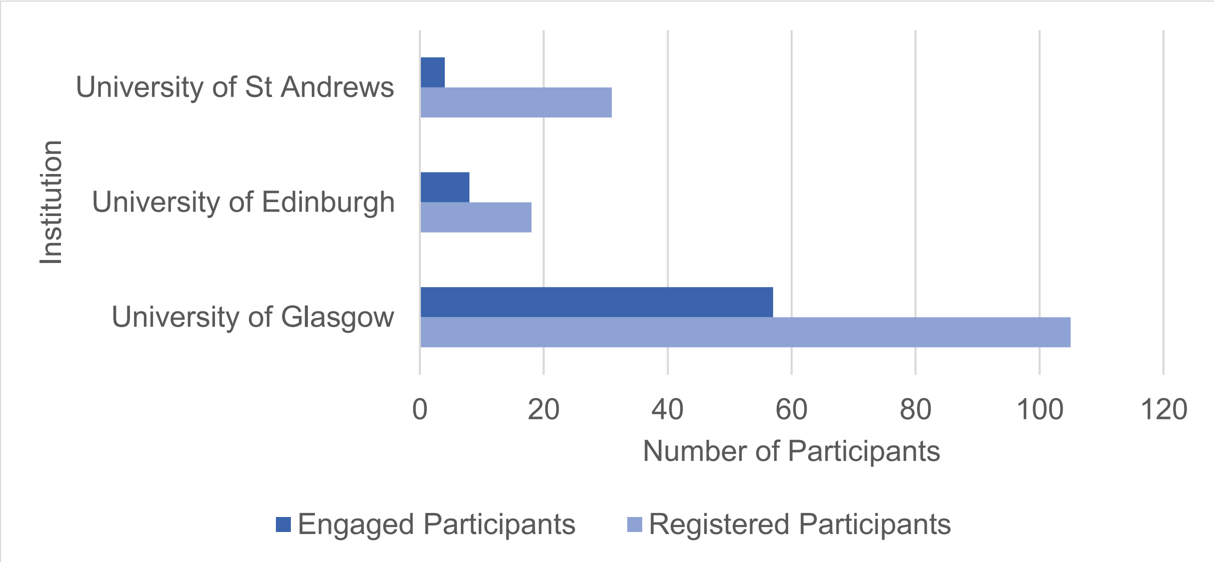
6. Participation and Engagement Analysis

A total of 154 eligible participants registered with the SRTP Academy across the Universities of Glasgow, Edinburgh, and St Andrews. Two registrations were excluded from analysis: one duplicate entry and one participant whose role did not meet the programme eligibility criteria for technical staff participation.

Institutional Representation and Engagement

The largest proportion of registered participants were based at the University of Glasgow (105 participants), followed by the University of St Andrews (31 participants) and the University of Edinburgh (18 participants).

Engagement analysis demonstrated variation in participation rates across institutions:



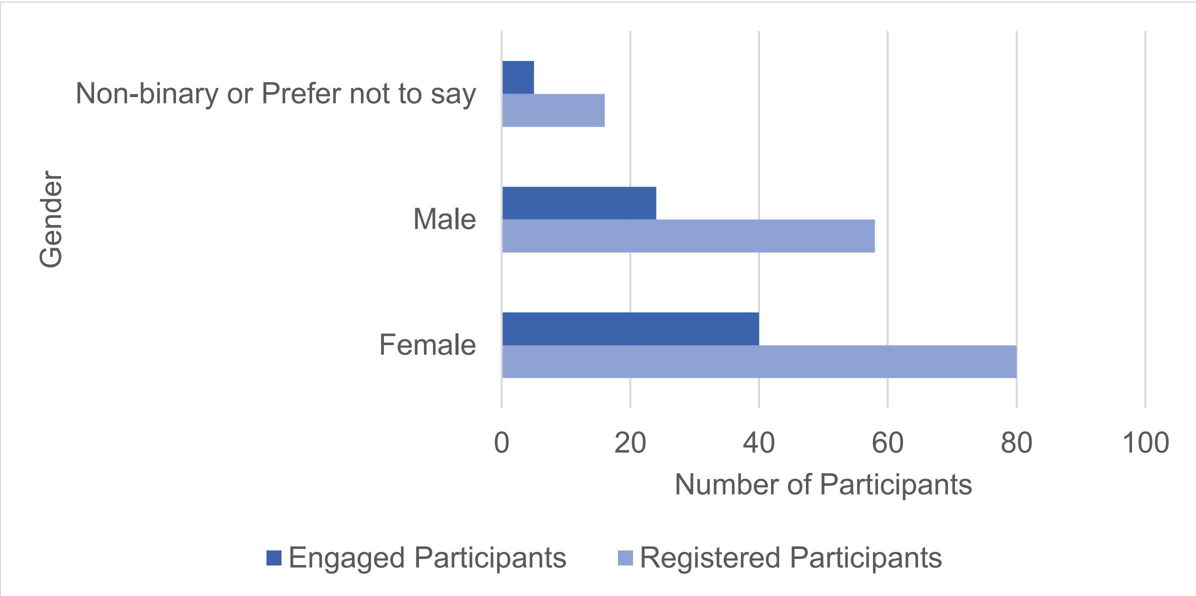
Engagement rates differed significantly across institutions; 54% of registered participants from the University of Glasgow and 44% from the University of Edinburgh engaged with at least one activity, while only 12.9% of registered participants from the University of St Andrews engaged in the Academy's activities.

An additional 22 participants engaged in Academy activities without completing the registration survey and are therefore categorised as "non-Academy participants" within the analysis dataset. These participants were excluded from analysis due to missing background information. Of these, nineteen were from the University of Glasgow and three from the University of Edinburgh.

Overall, engagement was strongest within the University of Glasgow cohort, both in absolute participation numbers and proportional engagement. Engagement from St Andrews was comparatively limited, suggesting potential institutional, operational, or contextual barriers affecting participation. These differences are explored further within the discussion and learning sections of the report.

Gender Profile

The participant cohort was majority female:



Women represented over half of all registered participants and also demonstrated higher levels of programme engagement. Among participants engaging in at least one Academy activity, 40 identified as women, compared with 24 men and five participants who either preferred not to say, identified as non-binary, or did not provide a response.

This pattern reflects higher participation and engagement rates among women RTPs within the SRTP Academy activities and evaluation sample. Given the historically male-dominated nature of many technical professions and research environments, this may reflect ongoing demand for development, visibility, and peer-support opportunities among women RTPs. This theme is explored further within the wider learning and policy implications section.

*Note: to avoid identification, the evaluator merged ‘Prefer not to say’, ‘No answer’, and ‘Non-binary’.

Ethnicity Profile

Participant ethnicity data demonstrated that the majority of registered participants identified as White (105 participants), while 49 participants identified as belonging to Black, Asian, minority ethnic, mixed, or other ethnic backgrounds, or chose not to disclose ethnicity.

More detailed breakdowns included:

Ethnicity Category	Number
African, Black, Caribbean or African/Black/Caribbean British	4

Arab, Arab British, Hispanic, Indian, Latino American, Middle Eastern, Mixed or Multiple Ethnicities	11
Asian or Asian British	18
Did not respond	16
White	105

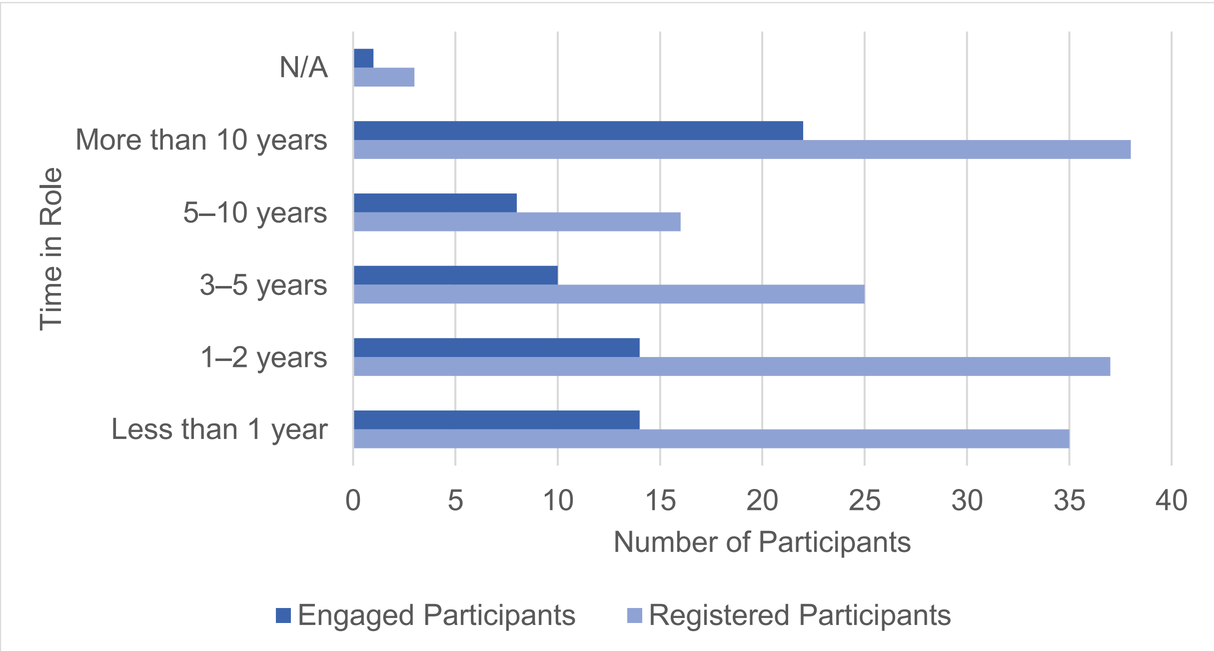
Among participants engaging in Academy activities, 46 identified as White (43% of total White cohort) and 23 identified as belonging to minority ethnic backgrounds or mixed ethnicities (46.9% of total non-White cohort).

While the participant profile broadly reflects the demographic composition of technical staff populations within participating institutions, the level of engagement among participants from minority ethnic backgrounds indicates that the Academy was able to engage a diverse participant group across institutions and career stages.

**Note: to avoid identification, the evaluator merged ‘Arab, Arab British’, ‘Hispanic’, ‘Indian’, ‘Latino American’, ‘Middle Eastern’, ‘Mixed or Multiple Ethnicities’

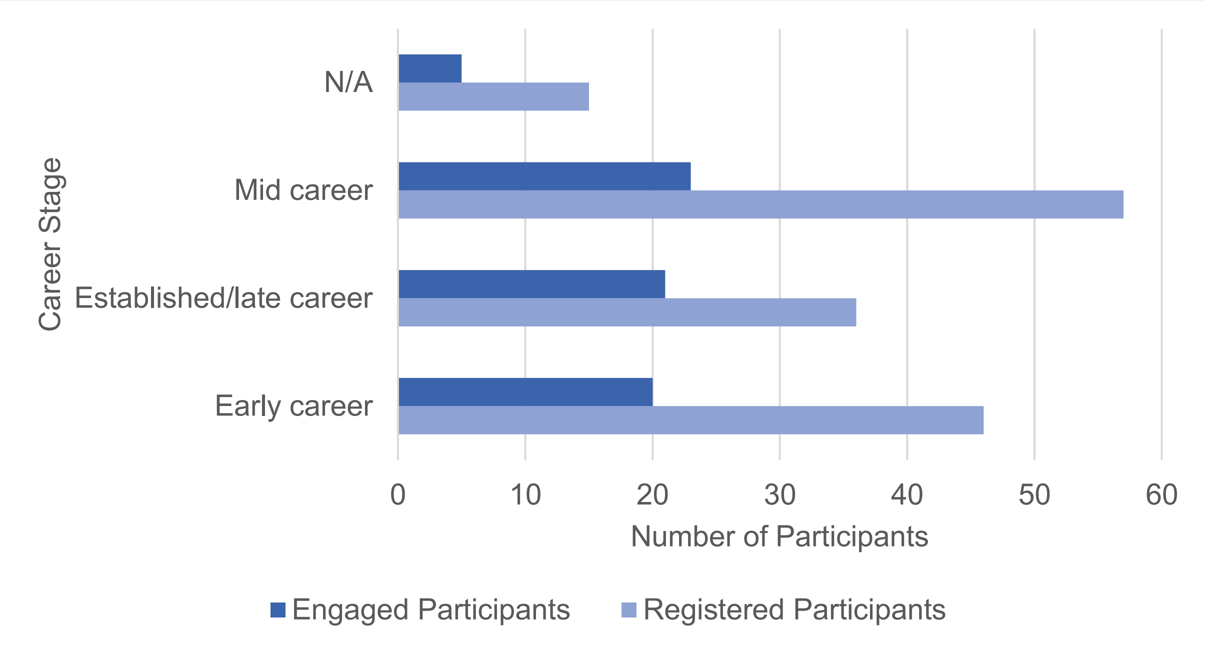
Career Stage and Time in Role

Analysis of time in role demonstrated a relatively even distribution across several career duration categories:



The highest representation was observed among participants who had been in role for more than 10 years (38 participants) and those in role for one to two years (37 participants). The lowest representation was observed among participants in the five-to-ten-year category.

Self-identified career stage presented a different pattern:



Although participants were distributed across all career stages, the largest group identified as mid-career, followed by early-career participants. Established or late-career participants represented the smallest identified category.

Notably, the findings suggest that length of time in role does not directly correlate with perceived career stage. For example, while relatively few participants fell within the five-to-ten-year role duration category, a substantially larger proportion identified as mid-career. This may reflect the non-linear nature of technical career pathways, progression structures, or movement between technical and hybrid professional roles across research environments.

7. Impact Analysis

Quantitative analysis was undertaken using end-of-programme survey responses from 26 participants, representing 16.8% of registered Academy participants. Of these, 21 survey participants had engaged with SRTP Academy activities, while five had not engaged. The five non-engaged survey participants have been identified as outliers and removed from the following analysis. It is also significant to note that one participant (SP15) consistently selected ‘Strongly Disagree’ to possible positive outcomes. While the sample size is not large enough to indicate that they are an outlier, and they did engage in Academy activities, their response impacted the average expression.

The survey explored perceived changes in leadership capability, professional development, networking, collaboration, and engagement outcomes associated with participation in the SRTP Academy. Overall, the findings indicate positive outcomes across leadership development, peer networking, collaboration, and access to opportunities, although impacts varied across different skill areas and outcomes.

To support comparison across groups of different sizes, qualitative coding frequencies were normalised by the number of responses within each demographic or institutional category. This approach adjusts for uneven response rates and prevents findings from being disproportionately influenced by groups with larger numbers of participants. The normalised figures therefore represent the relative prevalence or intensity of coded themes within each category, rather than raw excerpt counts alone. Multiple excerpts could be coded from a single participant response where several distinct ideas or experiences were expressed, meaning the qualitative analysis reflects both the presence and depth of discussion relating to particular themes.

Leadership Capability and Professional Development

The quantitative findings indicate that the Academy's strongest impact was in relation to leadership capability and leadership behaviours. The majority of respondents (thirteen) agreed that their leadership capability had increased, while twelve reported adopting new leadership behaviours or developing new leadership skills through engagement with the Academy. In contrast, project management and grant writing demonstrated weaker reported outcomes, with most participants selecting neutral responses, particularly for grant writing where fifteen respondents reported no clear change. These findings suggest that the Academy was more effective in supporting broader leadership confidence and professional identity than in developing specialist technical skills.

> *I feel more confident in my skills and my legitimacy (i.e., my imposter syndrome that I don't count has reduced a bit) and am planning to get involved with the Technician Commitment.* – Survey Participant 23

The qualitative findings reinforce these patterns. Professional development emerged as one of the strongest themes across participant responses, particularly among Technical Specialists, who reported substantially higher levels of discussion relating to upskilling, leadership development, and career progression than other occupational groups. Institutional differences were also evident, with respondents from the University of St Andrews and the University of Glasgow demonstrating particularly strong engagement with leadership and professional development themes. Mid-career participants and those with between three to ten years in role also discussed professional development outcomes most frequently, suggesting that the Academy may have been especially valuable for individuals navigating career progression and leadership development.

> *(I am) Preparing grant for next years BBSRC ALERT as Lead, preparing MRC project grant as co-Lead* – Survey Participant 2

> *I wanted to send a quick email to express my sincere gratitude for arranging the job shadowing opportunity. It was an incredibly valuable experience. I was particularly interested in learning about the advanced technical workflow, and the time spent observing the biological samples preparation and advanced microscopy like confocal was highly insightful.* – Event Feedback

Taken together, the quantitative and qualitative findings suggest that the Academy functioned most effectively as a leadership and professional identity development intervention, supporting confidence, leadership practice, and career development more strongly than immediate technical skill acquisition in areas such as project management or grant writing.

Networks, Community, and Peer Support

The quantitative findings demonstrate strong positive outcomes relating to networking and community building within the Academy. Ten participants agreed that they had developed a stronger peer network through participation, while fourteen agreed or strongly agreed that they felt a sense of community with other Academy participants. In addition, fourteen respondents reported that the Academy provided opportunities they could not access within their own institution, highlighting the perceived value of cross-institutional engagement and collaborative delivery. The low number of negative responses across these measures suggests that participants generally viewed the Academy as successful in fostering peer connection and professional support networks.

> *I have built new collaborations with technicians from other teams across the University of Glasgow. I have mentored other technicians who needed my chemical expertise.* – Survey Participant 6

> *Got to meet technicians from diverse backgrounds, and made connection with lab manager with very similar lab and thus potential for knowledge exchange.* – Event Feedback

The qualitative findings reinforce these results while also highlighting important differences across groups. Collaboration and community emerged as a particularly strong theme among respondents from the University of Glasgow and the University of St Andrews, suggesting that experiences of peer connection and networking may have varied across institutional contexts. Early-career participants and those in role for less than two years demonstrated the highest levels of discussion relating to collaboration and community, indicating that the Academy may have been especially valuable in supporting belonging, confidence, and professional networks among those at earlier stages of career development.

There is now more of a network which allows me to potentially build new cross-disciplinary collaborations in a way that wasn't possible before. – Survey Participant 23

Qualitative analysis also demonstrated a strong relationship between engagement levels and perceptions of community-building. Participants with high levels of engagement in Academy activities produced substantially higher levels of discussion relating to collaboration and community themes, suggesting that sustained participation may have strengthened peer relationships, professional identity, and feelings of belonging. Together, the quantitative and qualitative findings indicate that the Academy was particularly effective in creating cross-institutional networks and fostering a sense of professional community among Research Technical Professionals.

It's been a really fantastic way of meeting other technicians and having cross-disciplinary and cross-institutional conversations. I feel less lonely and isolated, and more reassured in my skills and value. – Survey Participant 23

Behavioural and Institutional Outcomes

The survey findings suggest that participation in the Academy contributed to increased engagement in leadership, collaborative, and institutionally focused activities. The strongest positive responses related to mentoring, collaboration, and institutional contribution, with twelve participants (57%) reporting that they had, or intended to, mentor or support others, while eleven participants (52%) reported intentions to build new collaborations, contribute to institutional change, or take on new responsibilities. These findings indicate that the Academy may have strengthened participants' professional confidence and willingness to engage more actively within their organisations and professional communities.

I feel equipped to contribute to change generally. I have also been able to apply some of my learning to support my direct reports as well as an external mentorship scheme. – Survey Participant 16

The qualitative findings reinforce these patterns, particularly in relation to institutional impact and contribution. Respondents from the University of St Andrews demonstrated the highest levels of discussion relating to applying Academy learning within their institutions, with a normalised score of 16, compared with scores of 8 at the University of Edinburgh and 5 at the University of Glasgow. Participants described examples of influencing local practice, contributing to institutional activities, and applying learning within their organisational contexts following Academy participation.

Institutional impact themes were also more prominent among respondents in Technical Specialist – Leading roles and among those who had been in role for less than two years, suggesting that participants in operational leadership positions and earlier career stages may have been particularly likely to apply Academy learning within their institutions. Highly engaged participants demonstrated substantially stronger discussion of institutional impact themes, with a normalised score of 15 compared with 4.29 among low-engagement participants and 2 among moderately engaged participants. This suggests that sustained participation in Academy activities may have strengthened participants' confidence and capacity to influence local practice, contribute to organisational development, and take on broader professional responsibilities.

> *I feel that I have more leadership skills and experience than I was aware of before and will take on more of a leadership role in my group.* – Survey Participant 10

In contrast, immediate measurable change relating to grant funding activity appeared more limited at this stage of the programme. Only five participants reported plans to apply for funding, while eleven indicated no intention to do so. As reflected in earlier findings relating to grant-writing skills, this is likely to relate to the differing relevance of funding responsibilities across technical roles and career stages, as well as the longer-term nature of developing confidence and opportunities in this area. Overall, the combined findings provide stronger evidence of early behavioural, relational, and institutional impacts than immediate technical or procedural skill development outcomes.

Barriers to Engagement

The most commonly reported barrier to engagement was time constraint, with twelve participants reporting this as a challenge. This finding is consistent with wider evidence relating to professional development participation among technical and research staff, where workload pressures and operational responsibilities can limit engagement opportunities.

> *Time is the constant problem.* – Survey Participant 26

Other potential barriers appeared substantially less significant:

- 20 participants reported that line manager support was not a barrier
- 18 participants reported no issues relating to awareness of opportunities
- 15 participants reported that relevance of content was not a barrier
- 15 participants reported that confidence to engage was not a barrier

These findings suggest that the Academy was generally perceived as accessible, relevant, and appropriately communicated, with structural workload pressures representing the principal constraint on participation.

Of the five survey participants who did not engage with SRTP Academy activities, three reported that time constraints were a barrier to engagement and two indicated relevance of content affected their engagement.

Perceived Value and Recommendation

Participants reported high overall levels of perceived value associated with the Academy.

I met some amazing people who have lots of valuable experience. – Survey Participant 13

When asked how likely they were to recommend the Academy, or a similar programme, to other RTPs, respondents provided an average score of 8.19 out of 10. Ratings were strongly concentrated at the higher end of the scale, with the largest number of responses recorded at 10 out of 10.

Similarly, participants rated the overall value of programmes such as the SRTP Academy at an average of 8.19 out of 10. Again, responses were weighted toward high-value scores, indicating strong perceived relevance and importance of technician-focused leadership and development provision.

… it is vital that technicians are supported into the future. – Survey Participant 26

The academy offered me the opportunity to develop skills which my home institution doesn't offer. – Survey Participant 9

Taken together, the quantitative findings suggest that the SRTP Academy generated meaningful positive outcomes in relation to leadership confidence, networking, peer support, collaboration, and professional engagement. The findings also indicate that the programme addressed a recognised gap in professional development provision for Research Technical Professionals, particularly through cross-institutional networking and community-building opportunities.

8. Case Studies

Case Study 1: Building Collaboration Through the SRTP Academy
Mid-career participant, Core Facilities and Shared Research Platforms, University of Edinburgh.

This participant joined the SRTP Academy seeking greater connection with “like-minded people” across institutions and technical disciplines. Working within a specialised imaging facility, they described feeling that technical staff could often become “siloed” within their local environments, despite taking on significant operational responsibility and leadership within facilities.

The participant engaged in several Academy activities including job shadowing, networking events, leadership workshops, and the Academy symposium. They particularly valued opportunities for face-to-face interaction and cross-institutional networking, describing these as more meaningful and accessible than larger national initiatives:

The SRTP was definitely more accessible. – Case Study 1

A key outcome emerged through the Academy’s job shadowing initiative, where the participant connected with a technical colleague in Glasgow working in a similar specialist area. Reciprocal visits helped re-establish a dormant collaboration between facilities and opened discussions around future joint activity and wider networking opportunities:

> *It's kind of reignited something where we can maybe continue a collaboration.* – Case Study 1

The participant described increased confidence in pursuing wider professional opportunities following engagement with the Academy, including involvement in grant review activity, external initiatives, and leadership development opportunities:

> *It's probably given me that internal recognition that I can do more and achieve more.* – Case Study 1

They also reflected on the broader cultural importance of technician-focused initiatives in improving recognition and visibility for Research Technical Professionals within research environments:

> *It feels like there's definitely more value and reward in what you do.* – Case Study 1

While the participant highlighted workload pressures and variable engagement across institutions as ongoing challenges, they viewed the Academy as a strongly positive experience:

> *These initiatives can only be positive.* – Case Study 1

Case Study 2: Building Networks and Confidence Through the SRTP Academy
Early-career participant, Research Technical Professional, University of Glasgow

This participant joined the SRTP Academy shortly after moving into a technical role within the University of Glasgow. With a background in synthetic and analytical chemistry, they were interested in developing both technical expertise and professional connections across the sector.

The participant engaged with several Academy activities, including workshops, networking events, the Academy symposium, as well as an independently organised exchange placement visit. They particularly valued the symposium, describing it as an opportunity to connect with RTPs across institutions and disciplines while learning more about the variety of technical roles within research environments:

> *It was a really nice way to bring everyone together and get to meet a bunch of new technicians while also seeing what people were working on.* – Case Study 2

A key outcome emerged through conversations at the symposium, where the participant connected with a technician in the Anatomy School who required support establishing a chemical inventory system. Drawing on their own expertise, the participant initiated contact and the two organised reciprocal lab visits and ongoing knowledge exchange:

I actually literally have that experience that you're looking for… I can help you do this. – Case Study 2

The participant also completed an exchange placement visit to MRI imaging facilities at the University of Glasgow's Garscube campus, gaining insight into specialist research infrastructure outside their own discipline:

I really enjoyed that, getting to see stuff that is outwith my normal thing by miles. – Case Study 2

Through the Academy, the participant described increased confidence in recognising the value of their own technical expertise and engaging with wider professional development opportunities:

It has made me feel more confident. I know that I have things that I can offer other people. – Case Study 2

They also reflected on the importance of technician-focused initiatives in helping technical staff connect beyond their immediate working environments:

Quite often with technicians, you just kind of go into that little bubble… this was a nice opportunity to get out and see what other people are up to. – Case Study 2

Despite workload pressures limiting participation in some activities, the participant described the Academy as a highly positive experience that supported networking, collaboration, and professional growth:

It's been really lovely to be part of something that is so technician focused. – Case Study 2

Case Study 3: Broadening Career Perspectives Through SRTP Programming
Early-career, non-Academy participant, University of Glasgow.

This participant worked across technical roles supporting chemistry and biotechnology teams at the University of Glasgow. With a background in analytical chemistry and teaching support, they were interested in opportunities that encouraged cross-disciplinary learning and professional development.

Although not a member of the SRTP Academy, the participant engaged with SRTP programming through a workshop and symposium event. They particularly valued hearing from RTPs working across different disciplines and career stages, including examples of technical staff progressing into research and academic roles:

After participating in SRTP activities, I feel like maybe a PhD is not a far-fetched idea. – Case Study 3

The participant described these experiences as helping to build confidence in pursuing future development opportunities and expanding their understanding of possible career pathways within higher education:

> *It makes me feel more confident in pursuing new roles or new opportunities.* – Case Study 3

They also reflected on the value of interdisciplinary engagement and learning from RTPs across different technical environments:

> *There's a lot to learn from different people.* – Case Study 3

Case Study 4: Building Confidence, Networks, and Professional Visibility
Mid-career participant, Technical Specialist, University of St Andrews

A Technical Specialist based within the School of Chemistry at the University of St Andrews described joining the SRTP Academy at a point where they were seeking opportunities for progression and development beyond their existing role. Having worked within technical services for almost ten years, they reflected that career progression opportunities within their immediate environment felt limited:

> *There's not much progression that can be done once you're in this kind of position.* – Case Study 4

The participant explained that although they managed complex technical responsibilities and supported delivery of a specialist service, opportunities for leadership development or wider professional engagement had been limited within their institution. Their motivation for engaging with the Academy was therefore driven by a desire to "develop myself", explore alternative professional pathways, and connect with others working in similar roles.

A recurring theme throughout the participant's account was the isolated nature of technical work within research environments:

> *These jobs can be quite isolated as well.* – Case Study 4

The participant identified the Academy's networking opportunities as one of its most valuable aspects, particularly the opportunity to connect with RTPs across institutions and disciplines. They described the Academy as:

> *A network of people doing similar roles… with opportunities to share knowledge.* – Case Study 4

The participant engaged particularly positively with the Academy's job shadowing activity, visiting a pre-clinical MRI facility at the University of Edinburgh. Although the technical context differed from their own chemistry-based role, they described the experience as highly valuable in exposing them to different working environments, practices, and approaches:

It was seeing something new… the science was quite similar to what I do, but it was completely different in other ways. – Case Study 4

The participant also described how observing another technician's enthusiasm and working style had influenced their own professional behaviours:

I've tried to make myself a bit busier almost, so say yes to a few more things. – Case Study 4

Following participation in the Academy, the participant reported increased willingness to engage in opportunities that they may previously have declined, including delivering talks, supporting work-shadowing opportunities for others, and taking on more visible professional activities:

I'm more willing to say yes to things. – Case Study 4

The participant linked this increased confidence directly to seeing how other technical professionals approached leadership, collaboration, and professional engagement:

It's a bit of seeing how other technicians and people act and do things. It's helpful. – Case Study 4

While the participant reported very positive experiences overall, they also highlighted structural barriers affecting engagement, particularly travel and geography. As a participant based in St Andrews, attendance at activities in Glasgow or Edinburgh often required substantial travel time and full-day commitment. Despite these challenges, the participant viewed the Academy positively and described it as an active initiative that moved beyond discussion toward practical development opportunities for RTPs:

I felt like the Academy was very active in what it was trying to do. – Case Study 4

The case illustrates how the SRTP Academy supported professional confidence, peer connection, and leadership development among mid-career technical staff who may otherwise experience limited access to structured development opportunities. It also highlights the importance of cross-institutional networking and experiential activities, such as job shadowing, in strengthening professional identity and encouraging greater engagement with leadership and visibility opportunities within technical careers.

9. Interpretation of Findings

The findings indicate that the SRTP Academy successfully addressed an important gap in professional development and peer support provision for Research Technical Professionals. The programme appears to have been most effective in strengthening leadership confidence, professional identity, networking, and cross-institutional community-building, rather than generating immediate changes in specialist technical skills such as grant writing or project management. This suggests that the Academy functioned primarily as a relational and developmental intervention, helping participants recognise their leadership potential, increase confidence, and strengthen their visibility within research environments.

The findings also demonstrate the importance of community and peer connection within technical careers. Participants frequently described reduced feelings of isolation, stronger professional networks, and increased collaboration across institutional and disciplinary boundaries. These impacts were particularly evident among early-career participants and those newer to role, suggesting that structured peer-support and networking opportunities may be especially valuable during transitional career stages.

Variation across institutions and participant groups suggests that local culture, operational context, and levels of engagement influenced participant experiences and outcomes. The strong relationship between sustained engagement and positive outcomes further indicates that repeated participation and continued opportunities for interaction are likely important factors in achieving longer-term impact.

While time constraints represented a significant barrier to participation, the programme was otherwise perceived as accessible, relevant, and highly valuable. Overall, the findings suggest that technician-focused leadership and networking initiatives can contribute meaningfully to professional confidence, collaboration, institutional engagement, and broader research culture change.

The SRTP Academy was successful in strengthening leadership capability, professional confidence, networking, and cross-institutional collaboration among Research Technical Professionals across the partner universities. The intervention also increased participants' confidence in contributing to institutional change and supported the development of stronger professional networks and communities of practice.