1. Summary of Digital Outputs and Digital Technologies

You should provide a brief and clear description of the digital output or digital technology being proposed, considering the following aspects: purpose, source data, content, functionality, use and its relationship to the research questions. You should identify the type of access envisaged, if applicable, such as 'freely available online'.

The summary should provide clear overview of what you intend to achieve technically, to enable reviewers to assess whether the plans for achieving this are appropriate. You should provide a level of detail which is appropriate to the digital output or digital technology being proposed and its cost and status within the project.

2. Technical Methodology

2a Standards and Formats

You should provide information about your choice of data and file formats. You must provide any relevant vital statistics relating to the data, such as size, quantity and duration. Although such statistics might need to rely on estimation, you should provide the reasoning behind your calculations. You should give your reasons for using the standards or formats chosen.

2b Data Acquisition, Processing, Analysis and Use

You should provide information about the process of technical development, showing how the standards and formats described in section 2.a and the hardware and software described in section 2.b relate to each other. You must show that you have considered how you will achieve your digital output or digital technology in practice, including issues of timetabling.

You should consider the technical development process from the point of data capture or data creation through to final delivery (in the case of a digital output) or analysis (in the case of a digital process). You should consider issues such as backup, monitoring, quality control and internal documentation where relevant, identifying procedures which are appropriate to the research environment. For example Technical Reviewers acknowledge that the backup procedures which are possible during fieldwork might be very different to those which are possible within an office environment.
This section needs to relate to the timetable and milestones given in the Case for Support as well as the project’s overall research methodology. The Technical Reviewer will be assessing the alignment of the technical development process with other project activities for logic and timeliness.

3. Technical Support and Relevant Experience
You should provide information about the relevant expertise, including examples, of all individuals, facilities, organisations or services that will be responsible for the technical components of your project.

You should identify which aspects of the technical work will be undertaken by these project participants, identifying key individuals where possible. It should be clear to a reviewer that you have access to the appropriate skills and expertise that will deliver a successful project.

In your assessment of risk, under ‘Project Management’ in the Case for Support, you should consider the risks to the project if a key individual becomes unavailable, including the contingency plan for acquiring these skills from elsewhere.

You are encouraged, wherever appropriate, to seek partners from outside your institution to cover the technical elements of the project, and/or to seek relevant external advice. The key consideration is that your project should be informed by the right level of technical expertise in conception, development and execution. You should provide information about any external advice which you have sought.

4. Preservation, Sustainability and Use

4a. Preserving Your Data
Preservation of digital outputs is necessary in order for them to endure changes in the technological environment and remain potentially re-usable in the future. In this section you must state what, if any, digital outputs of your project you intend to preserve beyond the period of funding.

The length and cost of preservation should be proportionate to the value and significance of the digital outputs. If you believe that none of these should be preserved this must be justified, and if the case is a good one the application will not be prejudiced.

You must consider preservation in four ways: what, where, how and for how long. You must also consider any institutional support needed in order to carry out these plans, whether from an individual, facility, organisation or service.

You should think about the possibilities for re-use of your data in other contexts and by other users, and connect this as appropriate with your plans for dissemination and Pathways to Impact. Where there is potential for re-usability, you should use standards and formats that facilitate this.

The Technical Reviewer will be looking for evidence that you understand the reasons for the choice of technical standards and formats described in Section 2.a Technical Methodology: Standards and Formats.

You should describe the types of documentation which will accompany the data. Documentation in this sense means technical documentation as well as user documentation. It includes, for instance, technical description, code commenting, project-build guidelines, the documentation of technical decisions and resource metadata which is additional to the standards which you have described in Section 2.a. Not all types of documentation will be relevant to a project and the quantity of documentation proposed should be proportionate to the envisaged value of the data.

4b. Ensuring Continued Accessibility and Use of your Digital Outputs
In this section you must provide information about any plans for ensuring that digital outputs remain sustainable in the sense of immediately accessible and usable beyond the period of funding. There are
costs to ensuring sustainability in this sense over and above the costs of preservation. The project’s sustainability plan should therefore be proportionate to the envisaged longer-term value of the data for the research community and should be closely related to your plans for dissemination and Pathways to Impact.

If you believe that digital outputs should not be sustained beyond the period of funding then this should be justified. It is not mandatory to sustain all digital outputs. While you should consider the long-term value of the digital outputs to the research community, where they are purely ancillary to a project’s research outputs there may not be a case for sustaining them (though there would usually be a case for preservation).

You must consider the sustainability of your digital outputs in five ways: what, where, how, for how long, and how the cost will be covered. You must make appropriate provision for user consultation and user testing in this connection, and plan the development of suitable user documentation.

You should provide justification if you do not envisage open, public access. A case can be made for charging for or otherwise limiting access, but the default expectation is that access will be open. The Technical Reviewer will be looking for realistic commitments to sustaining public access in line with affordability and the longer-term value of the digital output.

You must consider any institutional support needed in order to carry out these plans, if not covered under Section 3, as well as the cost of keeping the digital output publicly available in the future, including issues relating to maintenance, infrastructure and upgrade (such as the need to modify aspects of a web interface or software application in order to account for changes in the technological environment). In order to minimise sustainability costs, it is generally useful that the expertise involved in the development of your project is supported by expertise in your own or a partner institution.

A sustainability plan does not necessarily mean a requirement to generate income or prevent resources from being freely available. Rather it is a requirement to consider the direct costs and expertise of maintaining digital outputs for continued access. Some applicants might be able to demonstrate that there will be no significant sustainability problems with their digital output; in some cases the university’s computing services or library might provide a firm commitment to sustaining the resource for a specified period; others might see the benefit of Open Source community development models. You should provide reassurances of sustainability which are proportionate to the envisaged longer-term value of the digital outputs for the research community.

When completing this section, you should consider the potential impact of the data on research in your field (if research in the discipline will be improved through the creation of the digital output, how will it be affected if the resource then disappears?), and make the necessary connections with your Impact Plan. You must factor in the effects of any IP, copyright and ethical issues during the period in which the digital output will be publicly accessible, connecting what you say with the relevant part of your Case for Support.

You must identify whether or not you envisage the academic content (as distinct from the technology) of the digital output being extended or updated beyond the period of funding, addressing the following issues: how this will be done, by who and at what cost. You will need to show how the cost of this will be sustained after the period of funding ends.