THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

Postgraduate Virtual
Open Days

Centre for Doctoral Training in Machine Learning Systems Introduction

Professor Amos Storkey and Stephanie Robin

EDINBURGH
extraordinary futures await

MLSYSTEMS PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

AMOS STORKEY – CDT DIRECTOR

The University of Edinburgh

Old College
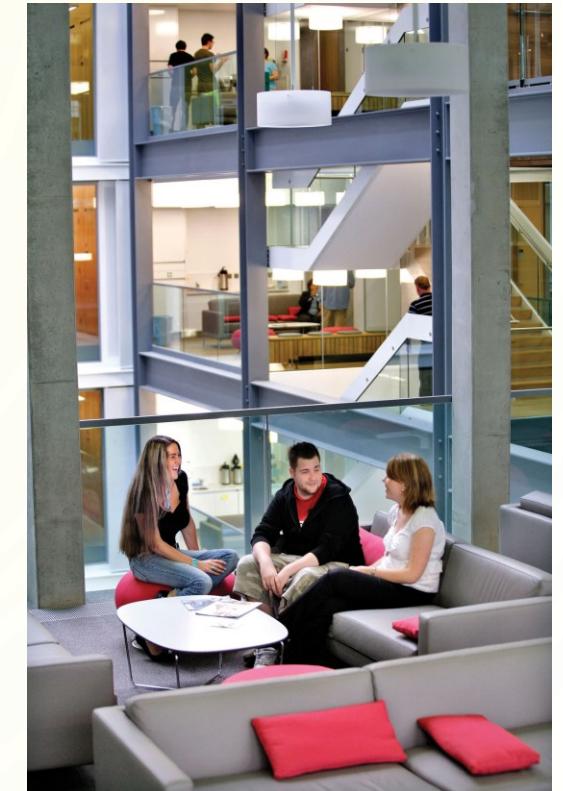
- Founded **1582**

- **49,640 students** total: 29,905 undergraduate, 13,120 taught postgraduate and 6,610 postgraduate research students from 150+ countries in 2024-2025

- **QS World University Rankings 2026:** 6th in the UK, 6th in Europe and 34th in the world

- **THES World University Rankings 2026:** 5th in the UK and 29th in the world
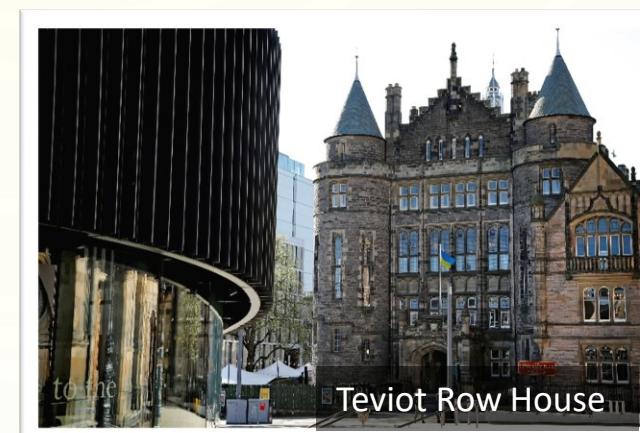
Teviot Row House

McEwan Hall

The School of Informatics

- **Research Excellence:** #1 in the UK for research power in Computer Science and Informatics THE ranking. 97% of our output (REF) is world leading (4*) or internationally excellent (3*).

- Our research goes beyond Computer Science and encompasses various disciplines such as **Artificial Intelligence, Cognitive Science and Data Science**

- >**300 academic and research staff, 130 professional staff** and > 2000 taught and research students **(~600 PGR students)**, largest in the UK and one of the largest in Europe.

- Experienced and dedicated **business development team** working with industry, business, and government partners to transfer our world-leading research to the Scottish and global economies.

The Informatics Forum

What is a CDT?

- ❑ Centre for Doctoral **Training**

- ❑ UKRI-funded (**EPSRC**)

- ❑ **Cohort-based** programme: **5 cohorts of about 12 students** between 2024 and 2028 (September start only)

- ❑ Embedded in schools/departments with an existing **PhD community**

- ❑ A **dedicated management and support team**

What is a PhD?

- ❑ A contribution to the body of **knowledge** in a field (submission of a PhD thesis by end of funding)
- ❑ **All about research**, in collaboration with supervisors, partners and peers

- ❑ Break from university study. NOT more of the same

- ❑ **Outreach**: publications, conferences, public engagement

- ❑ Defining **problems**. Building **solutions**. Assessing validity.
- ❑ **Future options**: company research, academic, management, startup (and many others).

The CDT MLSystems

- ❑ **Fully-funded studentships** (stipend, fees and research costs) for 4 years
- ❑ PhD programme with **integrated study** (credit-bearing courses) over 4 years
- ❑ Flexible **training** via credit-bearing courses (180 credits), transferable skills training programme and personal training
- ❑ CDT **cohort-based** events
- ❑ **Industry connection and engagement** via events and integrated internship (4 months) or research visits

The CDT remit: Machine Learning AND Systems

❑ ML performance depends on the systems that implements it. This is about machine learning methods that work!

❑ Students collaborate and research on the cutting edge across the full ml-systems stack. **PhD projects must include both elements: ML & Systems.**

❑ One supervisor ML / one supervisor Systems

❑ See the website for examples of projects:

▪ ML4Sys, Sys4ML, environment aware ML, efficient ML, continual learning, architecture design, optimization.
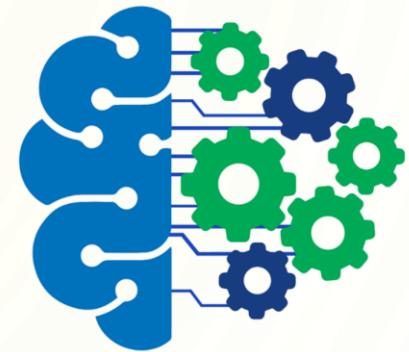
The CDT Training

Credit-bearing courses (180 cr)

- Y1: Machine Learning Systems

- Y1: Elective courses to suit individual needs

- Y1: MLS research project

- Y2: Controversies in the Data Society

- Y3: Internship report

CDT activities and Transferable skills

- Hackathons, mini-projects, seminars etc.

- Responsible Research and Innovation

- Entrepreneurship

- Research Communication and Public Engagement

- Career Planning

- EDI and Wellbeing

Personal Training

- Following a Development Needs Analysis, training to be tailored to individual requirements based on:
  - research project
  - career goals

The CDT Funding

- ❑ 4 years of UK-tax-free **stipend** at UKRI rate (£20,780 for 2025/26)

- ❑ 4 years of tuition **fees** (home and international)

- ❑ **Research costs** of minimum £6,000 to support research expenses

- ❑ Standard **IT equipment** kit, hotdesking facilities in the Informatics Forum, GPU compute cluster access

TechExpert Enhanced Stipend scheme

- ❑ For **Home students** only

- ❑ Annual stipend enhanced by **£10,000 on top of the UKRI rate**, for 4 years.

- ❑ **Additional requirements** (increased Widening Participation and Outreach activities, annual TechExpert meeting attendance etc.)

- ❑ Details to be confirmed in **January 2026**

CDT Industry Partners

Entertainment & Creative Sector	Finance & Cyber Security	Health & Life Science	Electronics	Compute Sector
LightSpeed Studios	BlackRock	Pharmatics	ARM	Huawei
3Finery	Cisco	Actual Analytics	ST Microelectronics	AMD
	Level E Research	Oxford Wave	NEC Labs	Keysight
			Graphcore	Codeplay
			Ubotica	Quix Quantum
			Synopsis	

— CDT Strategic Partners
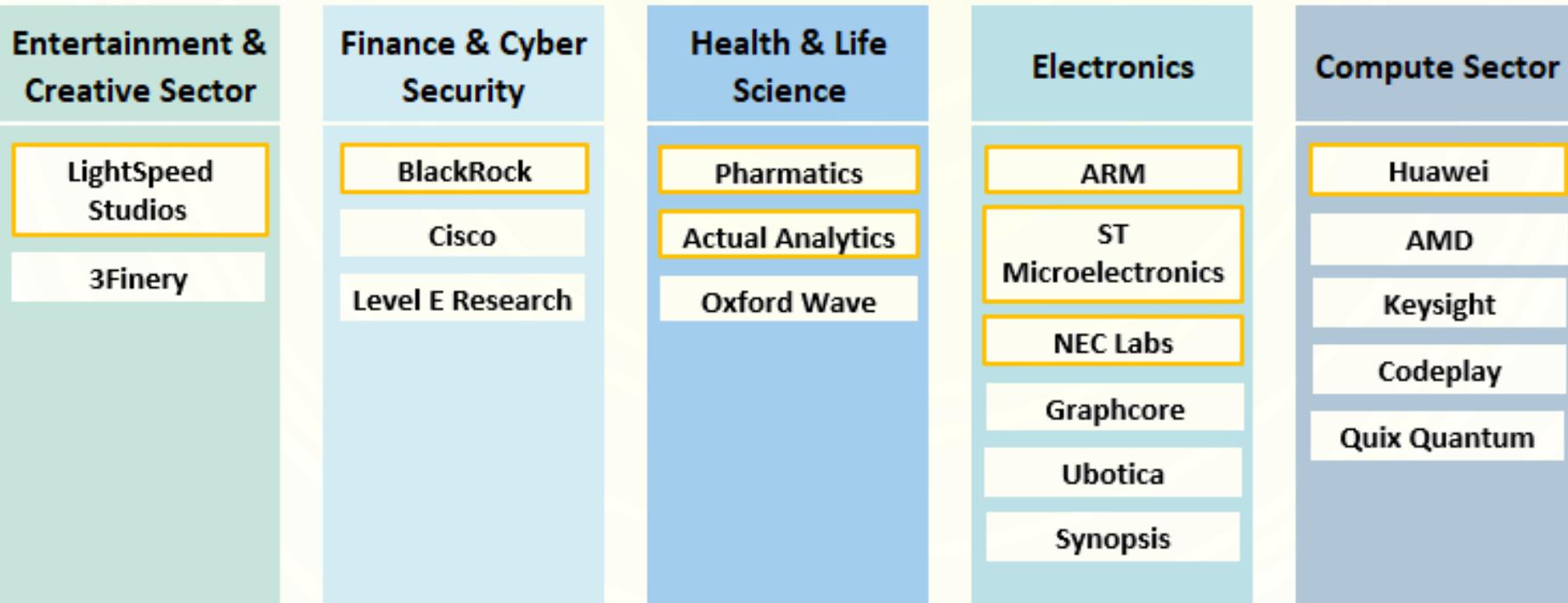
And many others...

Career Perspectives after an MLSystems PhD

What do students do post PhD?

- Research labs within companies (e.g. larger internet companies)

- Join startups developing AI or systems tooling

- AI Consultant or manager within companies

- Commercialise research

- Further research within academia

But the options are many!

The UKRI Training Grant Terms and Conditions

CDT students are subject to the UKRI Research and Training Grant Terms and Conditions. These include the provision of:

❑ **Paid leave**: annual leave, medical leave, family leave and other types of leave

❑ **Disability Support Allowance** (after needs assessment by the University Disability and Learning Support Service – available from the point of studentship's acceptance)

UKRI Training Grant T&Cs   UKRI DSA Framework

Student Support Services

University Student Support Services:

- Disability and Learning Support
- Wellbeing
- Health
- Counselling
- Sport and Exercise
- Student Immigration
- Careers
- Institute for Academic Development
- Accommodation
- Student Finance
- Childcare

Edinburgh University Student Association - EUSA

Living in Edinburgh

The Meadows
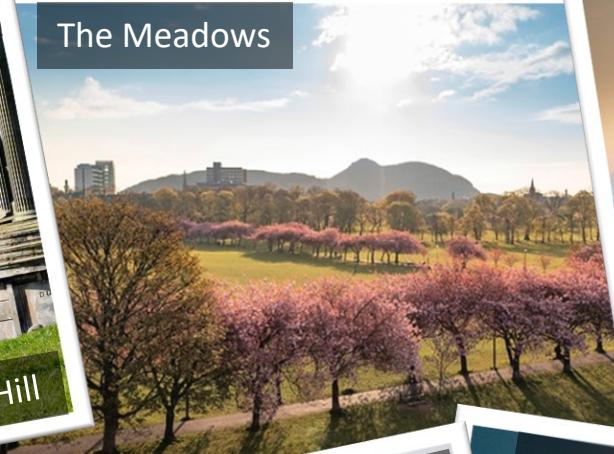
Top of the Salisbury Crags

Calton Hill

Central Campus George Square

Forth Bridge

Scottish Parliament

Princes Street Garden
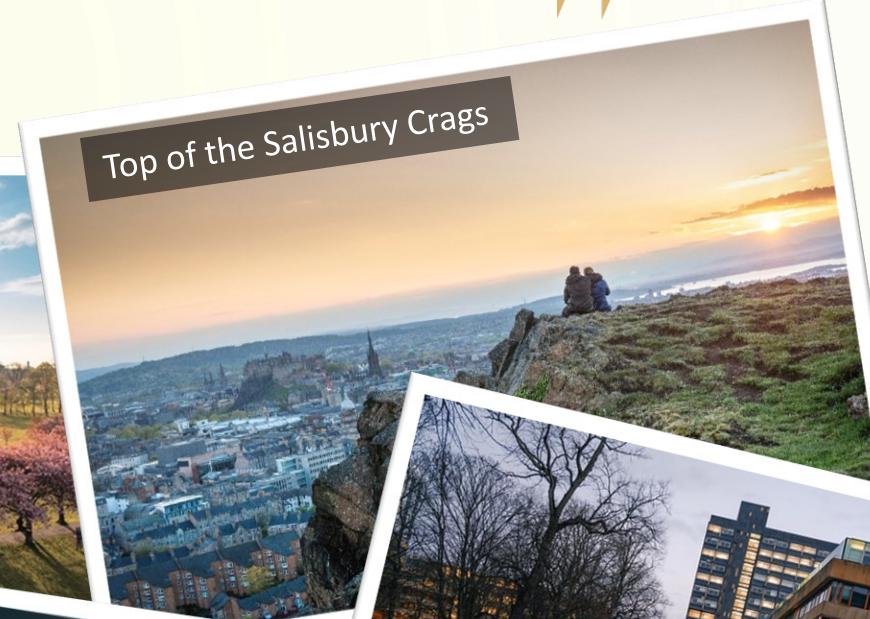
MLSYSTEMS APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

STEPHANIE ROBIN - CDT MANAGER

MLSystems Eligibility criteria

UKRI Eligibility Criteria

- All applicants, **regardless of their nationality and country of residence**, are eligible to apply.

- All appointees, regardless of their nationality and country of residence, will receive a **fully-funded studentship**.

Cap on international students number (30%)

MLSystems can recruit a maximum of 3 international students per year.

UoE fees status categories

- **Home fees:**
  - UK nationals, EU students with UK pre-settled status or settled status, non-EU students who have indefinite leave to remain, some Irish nationals
  - **AND** who comply with the 3-year UK/EEA residency immediately before the start of the degree (UK or Ireland residency for Irish nationals)

- **International fees:** all other categories

Exceptions: refugees, children of UK nationals, legitimate absence from the UK for UK nationals

More on the CDT webpages

MLSystems Entry requirements

Academic Eligibility Criteria

- ❏ minimum of **2.1 undergraduate degree** or equivalent

- ❏ Relevant **work experience** and/or a **Masters** degree will be considered

- ❏ A Master's degree is not a requirement to apply for an MLSystems studentship

ATAS

If you are not an EU, EEA or Swiss national, you may need an Academic Technology Approval Scheme clearance certificate to study on this programme.

Deadline for an offer for ATAS students is 30th April 2026.

English Language Requirements (for non-native English speakers)

Degree taught and assessed in English:

- ▪ UG or PG

- ▪ No older than 5 years at programme start

- ▪ taught and assessed in English in a majority English speaking country (see list)

English Language Tests

- ▪ IELTS Academic, TOEFL-iBT, CAE, CPE, Trinity ISE (see minimum marks required on web)

- ▪ No older than 2 or 3.5 years

More on the CDT webpages

Application Process Overview

Application Stage 1 | Application Stage 2

CDT First-stage Application Form → CDT Triage 1 → Full Application on University's system → CDT Triage 2 → Applications are passed on to supervisors for assessment

Unsuccessful applicants are given brief feedback as to why they have been rejected.
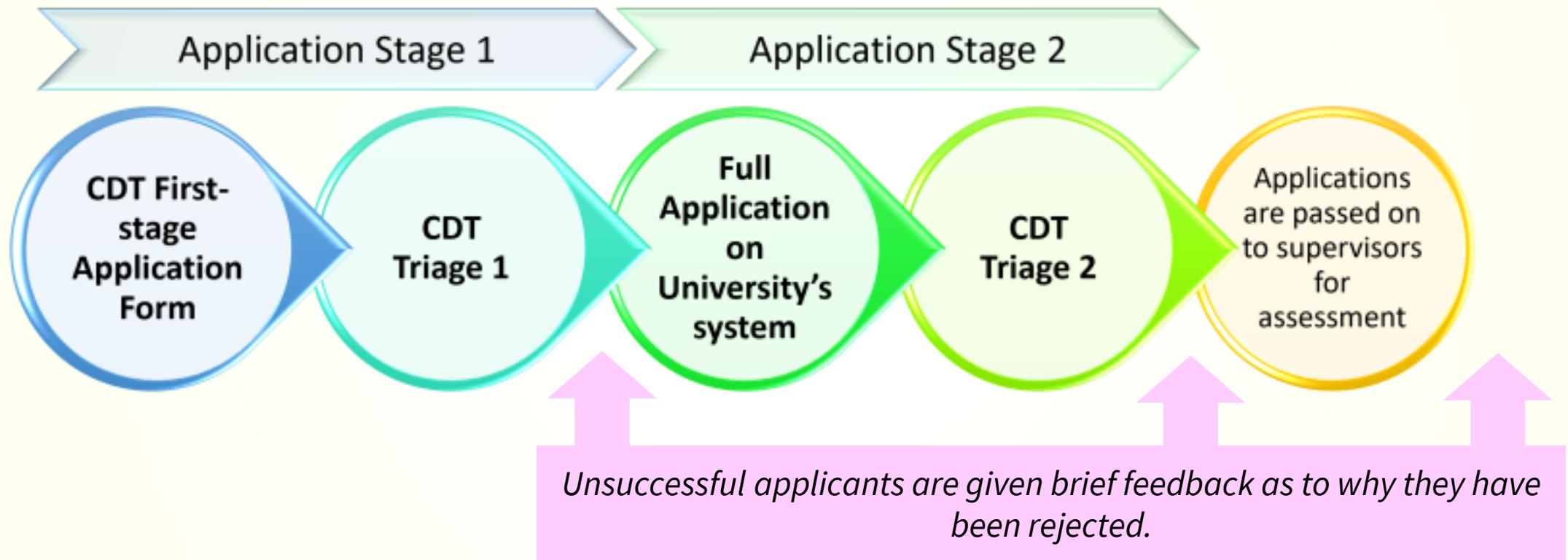
More on the CDT webpages

MLSystems Application Pathways

Student-led PhD Project

- Candidates have an **idea of a PhD research** which fits the **CDT remit** and which they would like to pursue.

- They find **a supervisor willing to supervise them.**

- Candidates submit a summary of their own research proposal via the **first-stage Application Form.**

- They submit a full **Research Proposal** within their **EUCLID application.**

- **Final PhD project** is defined by the students and their supervisor once on board, in year 1.

Company-Linked PhD Projects

- Candidates find a good fit in one of the **pre-defined or exploratory Company-linked PhD projects advertised by the CDT**.

- These PhD projects are generally **funded or partly-funded by Industry** and will not vary from the initial project description.

- Candidates **contact the primary supervisor** as indicated on the project advert.

- They then submit a "fit-to-project statement" within their **first-stage Application Form.**

- They submit a **Research Approach** document within their **EUCLID application.**

More on the CDT webpages

The 4 Application Steps

STEP 1: Get support from a supervisor

STEP 2: Submit a first-stage Application Form (online)

STEP 3: Submit a full application on EUCLID
(if invited to do so)

STEP 4: Wait for the outcome

More on the CDT webpages

First-stage Application Deadlines

Round	Applicants	Applications open	Applications close
Round 1	**All Applicants**	**08/10/2025 00:00**	**11/12/2025 23:59**
Round 2	Home Applicants only	12/12/2025 00:00	02/02/2026 23:59
Round 3	Home Applicants only	03/02/2026 00:00	23/03/2026 23:59
Company-linked projects	*As per advert*	*As per advert*	*As per advert*

More on the CDT webpages

MLSystems EDI and Widening Participation

EDI and WP form:

- **Collecting EDI and WP information to:**

  - ❑ **Know** who our applicants are

  - ❑ **Support** applicants from under-represented groups

  - ❑ **Monitor** the WP data across the selection cycle

  - ❑ **Comply** with EPSRC EDI Data collection

- **Under-represented groups:** female students, ethnic minority background, declared disability, first generation to attend university, caring responsibilities, lower socio-economic backgrounds, care-experienced, estranged students etc.

- **Not seen by selectors/supervisors**

- Kept **confidential**

- **Voluntary** – can be left blank

Special Circumstances

You can disclose Special Circumstances and Barriers to your study or opportunities in your **first-stage application form** for supervisors/selectors to take into consideration when assessing your application.

Applicant Support

Applicants Information Sessions

Applicants FAQs

More on the CDT webpages

Selection Process Overview

ML SYSTEMS

EDI and WP data is monitored

Application stage

1 - Applicants complete and submit a **CDT First-stage Application Form** (typically mid-Dec).

2 - Suitable applicants are invited to submit a **full application on EUCLID** by the application deadline (typically mid-January).

Screening

Applications are **screened** for completeness and relevance and sent to supervisors for review.

Supervisor selection

Supervisors review applications and **shortlist** their preferred candidates.

Supervisors arrange **interviews** with their shortlisted applicants.

Supervisors **nominate** their selected applicants to CDT.

Offers

CDT team makes **final selection** of candidates and sends **offers**.

Post-offer **visits**

Reserve list in operation until all offers are accepted. Possibility of additional recruitment rounds for Home students only.

More on the CDT webpages

Selection Process Timeline (Round 1)

Applications open	08/10/2025
First-stage Application Form submitted by	**11/12/2025**
EUCLID Full application deadline	**22/01/2026**
Shortlisting and interviews by supervisors	Late January to Late February
First round of offers sent by	Beginning of March
Post-offer visits and first-round offer acceptance deadline	Mid/Late March
Second round(s) of offers (reserve list)	Until end of May

More on the CDT webpages

What we are looking for

Scientific Skills

❑ Substantial knowledge of the background methodology

❑ Good mathematical understanding and capability: a confidence and competence in handling mathematical ideas, and manipulations.

❑ Clear computational and software engineering experience

❑ Good basic computer science understanding

Research skills

❑ Clear experience of doing research and a level of capability at that research

❑ Evidence of scientific writing capability

Professional/Transferable Skills & Competencies

❑ Substantial proactivity

❑ Evidence of diligence, honesty, rigour, scholarliness, and accuracy

❑ Evidence of friendliness, a care for others, a willingness to help out, good working with others, and commitment to working partnerships

❑ Evidence of excellence (awards and prizes, publications, achievements of all sorts, community engagement, project lead etc.)

More on the CDT webpages

Application Tips

Plan Ahead

- **Contact potential supervisors** before preparing your application.
- **Read the application guidance** fully and make sure you know what to do and expect.
- **Prepare your first-stage Application Form** using the downloadable version ahead of the online submission.
- *Do not wait for the last minute to submit your first-stage Application Form!*

Make your application count

- Ensure you have support from one (or more) supervisors
- Use the first-stage Application Form statements to demonstrate the **skills**, **experience and knowledge** you will bring to the project and the CDT.
- Make sure that your **research summary** is detailed enough to give us a good overview of what your proposed research looks like and which problem(s) you will be trying to address.
- **Adjust** your research proposal to the **CDT remit** (both Machine Learning and Systems)

More on the CDT webpages

First-stage Application deadline (Round 1):
11 December 2025 23:59

FOR SEPTEMBER 2026 ENTRY

https://informatics.ed.ac.uk/cdt-in-machine-learning-systems/apply

Any questions:

Stephanie Robin and Jack Lee
mlsystems-enquiries@inf.ed.ac.uk

Did you get the info you were looking for?

- Programme-specific info: https://postgraduate.degrees.ed.ac.uk/

- Chat to our Students: https://edin.ac/student-chat-pg

- Any other questions (including, Fees & Admissions) email: futurestudents@ed.ac.uk

- Read our students' blogs at https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/studentstories/

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EDINBURGH Extraordinary futures await