THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

UKRI AI Centre for Doctoral Training in **Designing Responsible NLP**

Session starts at:

1100 GMT

20th November 2025

EDINBURGH
Extraordinary futures await

Designing Responsible Natural Language Processing

UKRI AI Centre for Doctoral Training in Responsible and Trustworthy in-the-world Natural Language Processing

UK Research and Innovation

THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

Virtual Open Day for 2026/2027 starts

20th November 2025

What we will do in the session …

- Introduce ourselves and the CDT programme
- Explain why the CDT has been funded and what it focuses on
- Give a sense of how the CDT compares to a traditional PhD, and cover the funding and other benefits that come with a CDT studentship

What we will not do in the session …

- Go through the application process in close detail
- Give advice or feedback on individual applications
  - There is lots of material already on the CDT website: https://www.responsiblenlp.org/

- We will likely struggle to answer all your questions today!

Who we are

John Vines

CDT Director &
Training Director

Mirella Lapata

CDT Co-Director &
Recruitment Lead

Stefania Pasare

CDT Manager

Alexandra Gillespie

CDT Student

Who we are - the wider team

Ewa Luger
Co-Director (College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences)

Frank Keller
Training Director

Nicola Osborne
Partnerships and EDI Director

Daniel Shorr
Business Development Manager

Eeva Holtta
PhD Experience Coordinator

Ivan Titov
Informatics Lead

Melissa Terras
ECA Lead

Catherine Lai
PPLS Lead

Lachlan Urquhart
Law Lead

Yolanda Shumba
CDT Administrator

What is our CDT focused on?

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Large Language Models

Recommender Systems

Generative AI

Text-to-Image

Multi-modal NLP

Voice and Speech Technologies

Translation Technologies

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A focus on in-the-world – applications in use by real people, with real consequences

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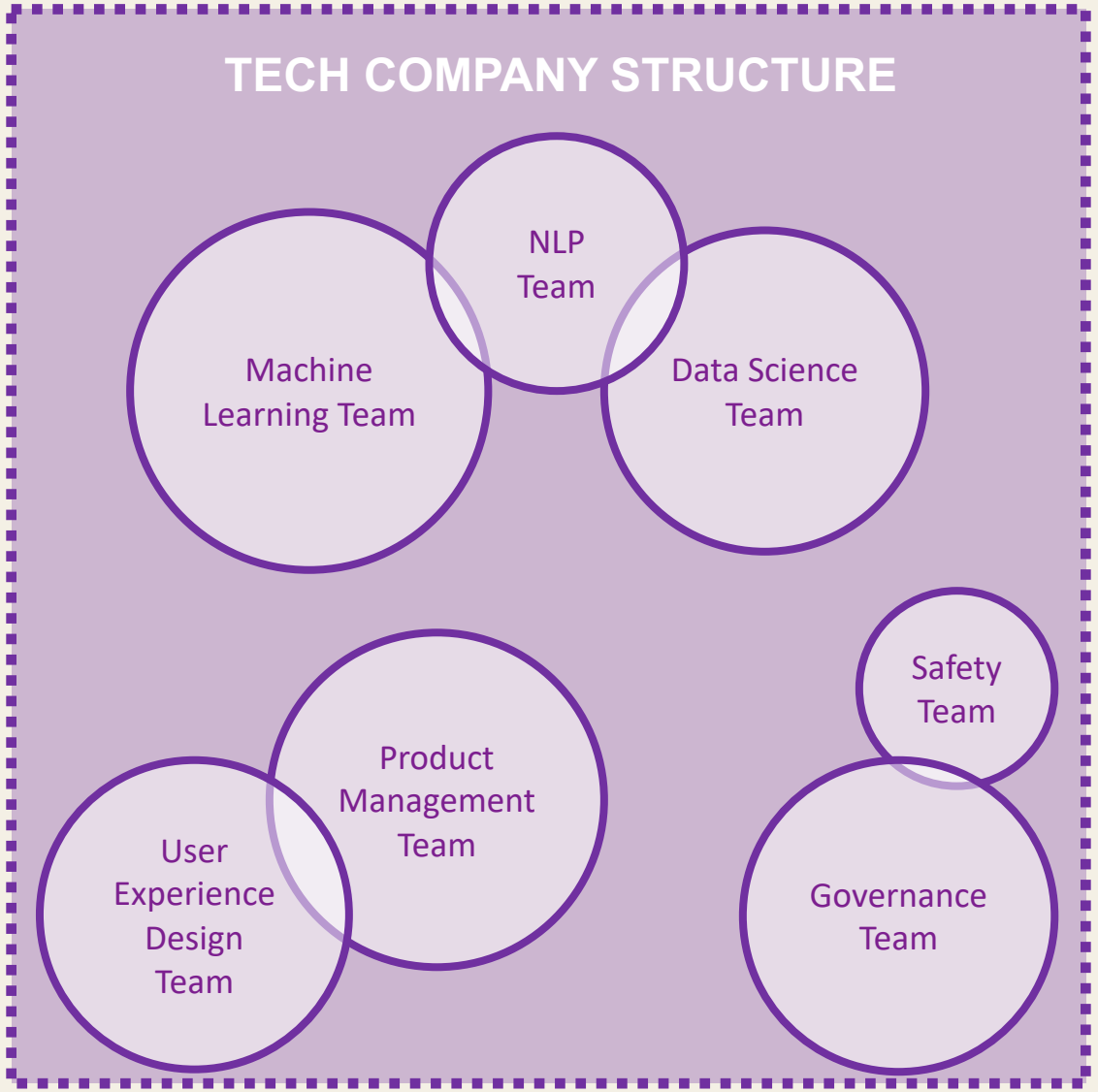
How is NLP currently irresponsible?!

- There are biases from how data is gathered, processed, and subsequently how models are trained and deployed, causing unexpected harms to certain groups of users.
- The black-box nature of models make interpretable representations and reliable explanations of outputs difficult, particularly for LLMs.
- They underestimate social complexity (e.g., issues faced by Microsoft's Tay or Meta's Galactica) and how language data, models, and interactions with people co-evolve over time.
- There is a disconnection between rapid technical development of NLP systems and the regulatory frameworks to oversee these technologies.
- Negative impacts on human autonomy, interaction and skills, posing significant safety risks.

Responsible NLP = diverse expertise



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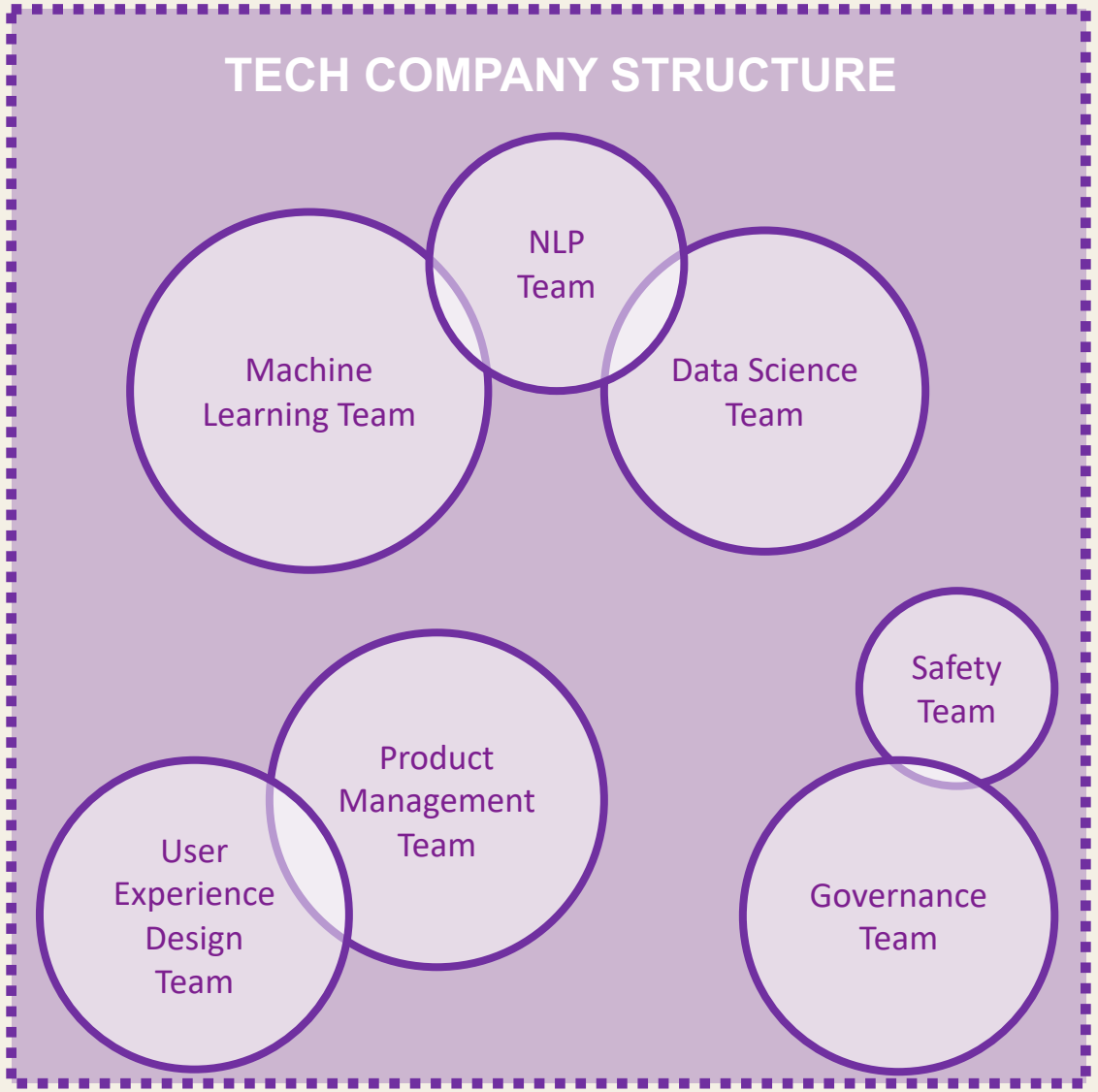
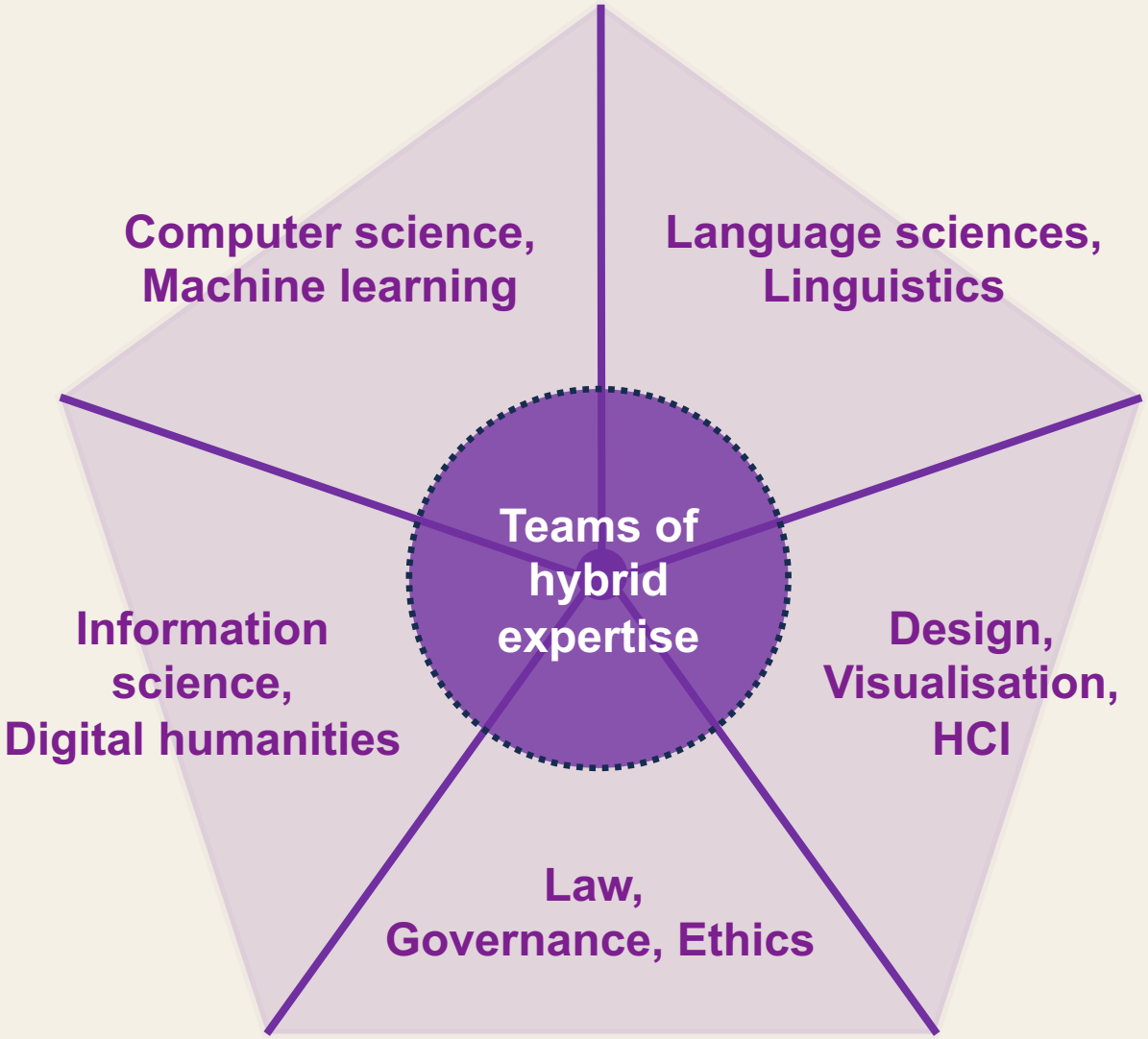
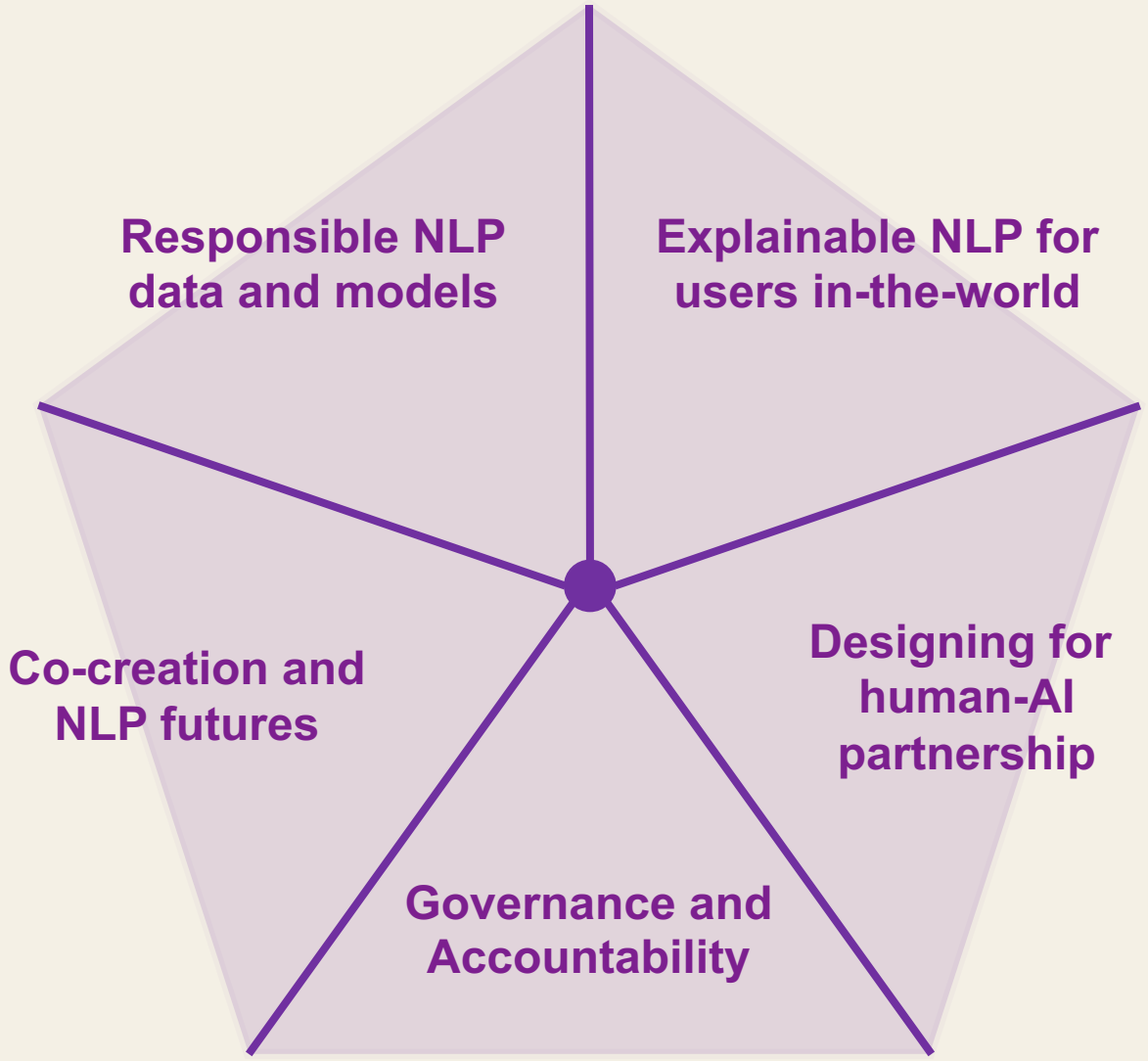




CDT Skills Domains

- When applying to the CDT, and again when starting training, you will be aligned to a primary Skills Domain (SD) and one or more secondary SD.
- Primary = might be more aligned to prior knowledge and skills which you wish to advance further; your narrow specialism
- Secondary = area you'd like to expand into and skills you'd like to fundamentally develop; your breadth and range
- We have specialist courses across UoE aligned to these domains.



Cohort-based PhD training

Students from Cohort 2, from rear left to front right: Sam Green, Yintao Tai, Dayyán O'Brien, Mugdha Pandya, Benoît Legon, Morgan Frodsham, Jakob Johannes Bauer, Alessandra Terranova, Cyril Birks, Harvey Donnelly, Daisy Yu, Billy Dixon, Alexandra Gillespie

- Integrated “credit bearing” courses taken together with emphasis on accumulative collective learning
- Team-based and collaborative projects
- Peer-support – both within cohorts and across cohorts
- Collectively shaping what responsible NLP is in practice via open fieldbook

PhD topics (examples)

Jinzuomu Zhong

Generative prosody, style and accent production

Neel Rajani

Cross-model mechanistic interpretability

Jacquie Rowe

Low resource machine translation and minority languages

Alex Gillespie

Implications of generative AI and the afterlife

Benoit Legon

Human-AI collaboration in investment processes

Morgan Frodsham

NLP in public policy and collective intelligence

Edinburgh Futures Institute

Based in EFI – a brand new £170m+ facility focused on interdisciplinary education, research and industry collaborations around socially inclusive and just data and AI futures. Co-located with the UK's Arts & Humanities Responsible AI programme and UoE's Generative AI Lab

Working with the public

Credit: Chris Scott

Credit: Chris Scott

Credit: Chris Scott

Credit: Chris Scott

Credit: Chris Scott

Engagement outside academia

Credit: Chris Scott

Credit: Chris Scott

Credit: Stuart Armittt

Studentship Funding for 2026/2027

- All CDT studentships are fully funded with stipend, research training and support grant, and waived tuition fees

- For the 2026/2027 competition, our CDT is part of a pilot UK Government programme called TechExpert where **Home Fees** students are eligible for an enhanced stipend of **£31,000 per annum** – with additional outreach and widening participation activities (still being defined)

- **Overseas fees** applicants will receive stipend at standard UKRI rate (approx. **£21,000 per annum**) – we are exploring ways we can provide additional onboarding support for overseas applicants

Other CDT Studentship highlights….

- All CDT students receive:
  - Funding for travel (e.g., for conferences, fieldwork, placements) and equipment – approx. £17,000
  - Access to world-leading UoE Facilities: EFI, Edinburgh International Data Facility and School of Informatics (for compute), Design Informatics and Edinburgh College of Art (for fabrication, prototyping, XR environments)
  - Funding for placements for all students (approx. £8,000) – plus industrial internships and policy fellowships
  - Access to innovation, entrepreneurship and “impact” training

Application timeline

- Deadline: **7th January 2026** (midnight GMT)
  - We may have an additional later deadline for Home Fees
- Online interviews: 23rd February – 30th March 2026
- Initial offers made: mid-March / April 2025

- For non-UK students – visa processing and ATAS certification: April – July 2025

- Arrival in Edinburgh: 14th September 2026

Resources on the website

- Overview of the documents needed (not a standard PhD application)
- Information on what to include to make a strong and compelling application
- More information on the structure of the training programme
- Detailed FAQ
- More webinars in Nov / Dec

www.responsiblenlp.org

Your Questions…!

Please post your Questions in the comments box on MS Teams

As they come in we will read them out and try to answer.

Going forward…

Designing Responsible Natural Language Processing

Contact: responsiblenlp@ed.ac.uk

Keep an eye on the website and LinkedIn:
https://www.responsiblenlp.org/
https://www.linkedin.com/company/designing-responsible-natural-language-processing/

Webinars – see website!