UKRI AI: Centre for Doctoral Training in AI for Digital Media Inclusion

Application Process – Cohort 2025-2026

Overview	The **UKRI AI: Centre for Doctoral Training in AI for Digital Media Inclusion** combines the world-leading expertise of the Surrey Institute for People-Centred AI at the University of Surrey, a pioneer in AI technologies for the creative industries (vision, audio, language, machine learning) and StoryFutures at Royal Holloway University of London, leader in creative production and audience experience (arts, psychology, user research, creative production).
	Our vision is to deliver unique cross-disciplinary training embedded in real-world challenges and creative practice, and to address the industry need for people with responsible AI, inclusive design and creative skills. The CDT challenge-led training programme will foster a responsible AI-enabled inclusive media ecosystem with industry. By partnering with 50+ organisations, our challenge-led model will be co-designed and co-delivered with the creative industry to remove significant real-world barriers to media inclusion.
	The overall learning objective of the CDT training programme is that all PhD researchers gain a cross-disciplinary understanding of fundamental AI science, inclusive design and creative industry practice, together with responsible AI research and innovation leadership, to lead the creation of future AI-enabled inclusive media.
Selection process	Our recruitment process includes selecting PhD students who will be distributed among projects according to the challenge areas identified. We're looking for academic excellence, passion for research on AI for digital media inclusion, and evidence of being able to work effectively as part of a team**.** The application process comprises the stages described below.

1 Complete CDT online application (Forms 1 and 2)

2 Submit a copy of your CV and your Case Study to CDT_AI@surrey.ac.uk

3 Pre-selected candidates attend Recruitment workshop (in person or online)

SELECTION PROCESS OUTCOME

4 Successful candidates submit formal PhD application (University online portal)

CDT Application process Cohort 2025-2026

The call for applications for scholarships for the academic year 2025/2026 is now open.
The deadline for submissions is **16:00 GMT on Friday 31 January 2025**.

Incomplete or late applications will not be considered

Stages 1 & 2: Online application forms

To apply for a PhD studentship in the CDT in AI for Digital Media Inclusion, you will need to submit the online forms (items 1 and 2 below) and supporting documentation (items 3 and 4)

1. **Online CDT Application Form 1** **https://forms.office.com/e/TPnq2F9NKC**
2. **Online Additional Information Form 2** **https://forms.office.com/e/ZLeHbVcVD1**
3. **A copy of your CV (2 pages max.) to** **CDT_AI@surrey.ac.uk**
4. **A Case study (600 words max.)** to CDT_AI@surrey.ac.uk (please label your files clearly with your LASTNAME.Name)

Stage 3: Recruitment workshop

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to a recruitment workshop at the University of Surrey in March 2025 (there will be an online option for those who need to attend remotely). The purpose of the recruitment workshop is to select balanced cohorts of applicants who are best suited to benefit from the CDT PhD research training in AI for Digital Media Inclusion and contribute to multi-disciplinary teamwork collaboration to address real-world inclusion challenges.

The recruitment workshop will include:
- Introduction to the CDT in AI for Digital Media Inclusion and the challenge-led research training programme with industry.
- Group task working in small multi-disciplinary groups to propose an approach using AI to enable inclusion for all in a media experience. This exercise will assess the applicants' aptitude for teamwork and problem solving with others from different backgrounds and perspectives.
- Interview with a panel to further explore motivation, passion for the subject, ability to engage in interdisciplinary thinking and problem-solving skills. This will include discussion of the submitted case study.

Outcomes and Decisions: Pre-selection stage

Applicants will be notified by email when a decision has been made (late March/early April). For applicants accepted onto the CDT programme a provisional offer will be made by the CDT subject to completion and submission of a formal PhD application via the chosen University (Surrey or Royal Holloway University of London) portals with the required documentation.

The deadline by which applicants must accept their CDT provisional offer will be stated in the notification email. Candidates will be invited to discuss their preferred location for their PhD studies (Surrey/Royal Holloway University of London) prior to the formal offer being issued.

Stage 4: University Official PhD Offers

Formal Offers (academic and funding) will be made by either University in line with the academic and language requirements set out in the admissions statement for the programme, taking into account relevant experience. Offers may be conditional or unconditional. Unconditional offers will be made where applicants have already met the conditions and provided evidence. Conditional offers will be made where academic or language qualifications have not yet been fulfilled specifying the requirements that must be met.

Guidelines for Additional information Required **- Form 2** **- Case Study**	# CDT Candidates additional information (Online Form 2)

The CDT Candidates Additional Information (Form 2) contains standardised monitoring questions about your personal characteristics. **You are not obliged to provide this information and it will not form part of the assessment process. We will use it to evaluate our equality, diversity and inclusion practices** and report back to our funder. All questions include the option 'prefer not to say'.

As the CDT is publicly funded by UKRI, we are required to collect information about applicants seeking to be considered for this PhD programme. The data will be treated as confidential and will be held separately from the identifying information that you provide in the first section below. Only a limited number of CDT members will be able to link the two sets of data. We need to maintain this link so that we can understand applicants' interactions with us over time without asking you to provide the information multiple times.

Case Study guidelines
You are required to submit a case study (600 words max.) that reflects a specific idea or example **in which AI could be applied to improve digital media inclusion**. Your case does not need to be researched in detail. Please focus on identifying a single, innovative idea and communicating it clearly. **Your case study and a copy of your CV (2 pages max.) need to be submitted by the same deadline as the online form (16:00 GMT on Friday 31st January 2025).**

Case Study Task structure
- Title: A brief title that communicates the essence of the idea
- Overview (max 200 words): A top-level description of a specific way in which AI could be applied to improve digital media inclusion
- Inclusion impact (max 200 words): A more detailed explanation of the potential of this innovation for improving inclusion
- Challenges (max 200 words): A critical evaluation of the potential challenges involved in delivering this vision both technical and non-technical

Case Study Scoring
- Case studies will form part of the pre-selection process and will be discussed with you on the selection day. They will be scored based on the following criteria:
- Fit to 'AI for digital media inclusion' brief
- Clarity of communication
- Critical evaluation

Your case study score will be combined with other scores of the selection day criteria to inform the final decision

Selection criteria	The selection process will be conducted by members of staff who have been trained in equality, diversity and inclusion with respect to recruitment techniques. All interviews and selection processes will be undertaken in accordance with the University's policy on equal opportunities. All applicants are considered in line with the University's relevant code of practice for postgraduate admissions. Your completed online application (Form 1), CV and Case Study will be used to assess your initial eligibility and suitability for the programme. We're looking for academic excellence, passion for research on AI for digital media inclusion, and evidence of being able to work in a team. Applications are considered by at least two members of staff using the following criteria: - Academic achievement and relevant experience (50%) - Motivation and case study (30%)

	▪ Fit to multi-disciplinary cohort and teamwork (20%)
Scholarship details	Our scholarships funding is provided for a period of 4 years and cover ▪ UK home tuition fees (paid directly to the Institution) ▪ Tax-free maintenance payment (based on the UK Research and Innovation – UKRI's minimum rate) – Current amount for 2024-2025 is £19,237 per year ▪ Enhanced supplement of £4,000 per year As a doctoral student, you may be able to access additional funding to cover the cost of other related training and development opportunities. The above details are made in respect of full-time study.
Advice for applicants	Prospective candidates can contact CDT_AI@surrey.ac.uk for more details You can also contact members of the team as follows, Prof. Adrian Hilton – CDT Director: a.hilton@surrey.ac.uk Prof. Polly Dalton – CDT Co-Director: polly.dalton@surrey.ac.uk

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