



MSt AI Ethics and Society 2024-26

FAQs and further information for prospective applicants

September 2023



Please find below some frequently asked questions relating to the ***MSt in AI Ethics and Society***. We hope these will help provide additional clarity and inform your decision as to whether or not to apply. This should be read in addition to the information available at: [MSt in AI Ethics and Society | Institute of Continuing Education \(ICE\) \(cam.ac.uk\)](https://www.cam.ac.uk/continuing-education/ice)

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1. Programme design

a) What is a Master of Studies?

The MSt (Master of Studies) is a part-time master's degree (the part-time equivalent of an MPhil at Cambridge), designed for individuals who may be working full time as well as studying. MSts are not simply full-time programmes studied on a part-time basis. They are specifically designed as part-time programmes, to be flexible and accessible to accommodate the needs of working professionals.

An MSt programme allows you to develop your professional and academic interests for career progression, diversification and/or personal development. Many MSt students will have some years of experience in the field prior to undertaking the programme.

MSt programmes are academically rigorous postgraduate programmes, usually undertaken over two years, and cover 180 credits. They usually incorporate a significant taught element along with a research project and associated dissertation. Taught elements are normally broken down into discrete modules and research projects may be work-related, if appropriate. The modular structure of consolidated teaching blocks enables those living further away from Cambridge, including international students, to undertake an MSt.

Cambridge offers many MSts and has done so for many years. 2024-26 will be the fourth cohort for the MSt in AI Ethics and Society.

b) Is this a University of Cambridge Award?

Yes. In addition to being a University of Cambridge Award, the MSt is a matriculated programme, which means that you will be a member of a Cambridge college.

c) What is the Leverhulme Centre for the Future of Intelligence (CFI)?

The MSt in AI Ethics and Society is developed and taught by the University's [Leverhulme Centre for the Future of Intelligence](#) (CFI), a global research centre at the forefront of AI Ethics and impact research, in partnership with the Institute of Continuing Education. Founded in 2016, CFI is an interdisciplinary Research Centre focused on tackling all of the different challenges posed by AI over the short and long term and based in Cambridge. Funded by the Leverhulme Trust, CFI is directly made up of a network of Universities (Cambridge, Oxford, Imperial College and Berkeley), broader international academic partners, industry and policy makers.

d) What is the Institute of Continuing Education (ICE)?

The Institute of Continuing Education (ICE) was founded at the University of Cambridge in 1873 in order to bring the teaching and research of the University to working men and women. ICE designs, delivers and curates a portfolio of research-informed, world-leading, award-bearing undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications in a broad range of disciplines.

For the purposes of the MSt in AI Ethics and Society, ICE will act as the awarding body on behalf of the University and provide administrative support to both students and academic staff.

e) Can this course be taken full-time?

No. This course is only available part-time. If you are interested in a full-time course, you should consider applying for the MPhil offered by CFI, <http://lcfi.ac.uk/education/mphil-ai-ethics/>

f) Will this course run every year?

Yes, this course will take a new cohort each academic year. Please note that we can only consider applications for the year advertised and it is not possible to defer an application to a subsequent course year.

g) Can this course be studied entirely online?

No, the MSt in AI Ethics and Society requires attendance in Cambridge for the taught residential blocks, which are a key component of the course.

2. Course content

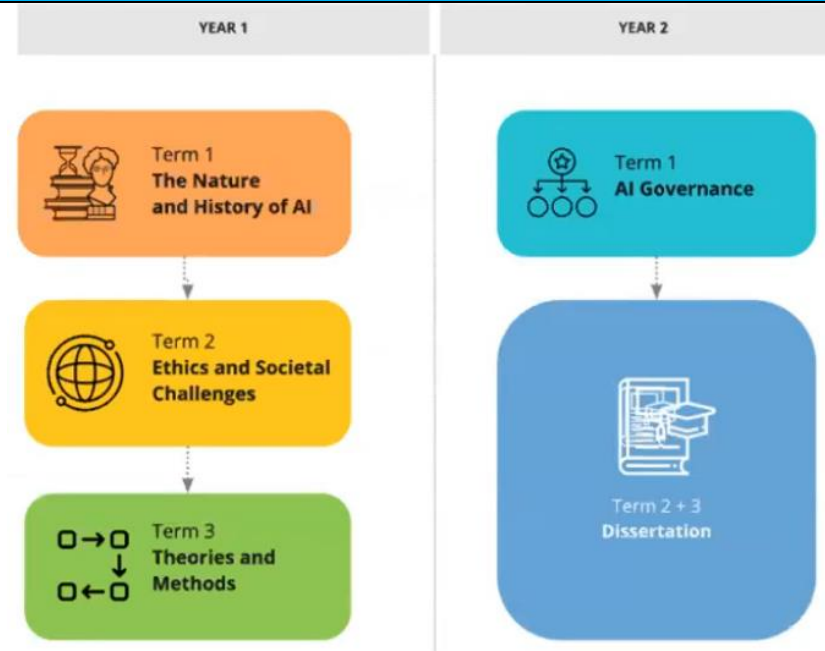
a) What does the course offer?

Artificial intelligence (AI) technology is rapidly developing and is increasingly being applied across sectors, posing significant ethical and societal challenges. There is therefore a national and global need to adequately enable future leaders and decision-makers to address these challenges. The Master of Studies in AI Ethics and Society will equip you with the rigorous knowledge and skills you need to effectively manage AI ethics within your sector or organisation. You will work (online and in person) with fellow students from across fields and with world-leading experts in areas such as machine learning, algorithmic bias, applied ethics, data privacy, AI governance and policy.

The full educational aims, learning outcomes and module content for the course can be found [here](#).

3. Course structure

a) How is this two year course structured?



Assessment

Assignments on the MSt are divided into two components: the essays (taken as a group), and the dissertation.

Students are expected to submit academically rigorous, appropriately referenced assignments. Guidance on academic writing is offered through the Course Guide and VLE, wider University resources - including within colleges - and within the first module.

As students enter the MSt with differing levels of experience of academic writing, it is expected that students will seek to develop these skills independently as needed throughout the programme.

For further information please see the Teaching and Assessment tab [here](#)

4. Course delivery

a) How is this Programme delivered?

We use a hybrid course delivery, with both face-to-face teaching in Cambridge, as well as content delivered through our Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). In addition to the in person residential teaching weeks, there will be interactive content on the VLE - likely to include videos, discussion forums, some synchronous discussion sessions and other aids - throughout the terms of the course.

b) What is a residential and when and where are they held?

A residential is an opportunity for the group to come together for a concentrated period of focus on the course content, to explore ideas together and to build a social community and professional network. You will be expected to attend four week-long residentials, as follows:

- 23 - 27 September 2024
- 06 - 10 January 2025
- 16 - 20 June 2025
- 08 - 12 September 2025

You will need to ensure that you are available to attend all the residentials, so we strongly recommend discussing this with your employer before you apply.

c) What are the residential requirements?

All students on the course are expected to attend the in person residentials. There is no option to attend residentials remotely.

It may be possible to stay in college accommodation during the week-long residentials (beginning on the dates above, subject to availability), but this it is not a requirement and you are free to make alternative accommodation arrangements.

d) What is the anticipated time commitment for the Programme?

In addition to attending the four residential weeks of the Programme, you should expect to spend around 6-8 hours per week (term time) studying for this course. This will include seminars, reading, self-study/reflection and there will be some optional 'live' discussion sessions. Asynchronous discussion forums and session recordings will be available in the VLE wherever possible.

In addition to the in-person, taught residentials, there will be a number of live lectures and seminars from a range of guest speakers. These will typically take place weekly or fortnightly on Friday lunchtimes (GMT or BST), in University of Cambridge term-time only. Sessions will be recorded if you are unable to attend them live.

e) Which online platform does the Programme use?

We use a range of technology to support the MSt. The hub of the learning materials and community is the VLE using Moodle, but Zoom and MS Teams are also used extensively across the University amongst staff and student cohorts.

f) What are University of Cambridge term dates 2024-26?

University term dates can be found here: [Term dates | University of Cambridge](#)

g) Which libraries would students have access to and are most of the resources now online for research purposes?

You will have access to online material across 115+ libraries – including the main University Library (9 million+ items) – your college library, and the Philosophy Department library. Membership of the University Library allows remote access to relevant journals and papers. The intention is for any mandatory text to be available online.

h) Who will be teaching on the Programme?

Our course team come from a variety of backgrounds, and there will also be a range of guest speakers. Currently leading on the Programme are: Dr Henry Shevlin, Director of Education, Centre for the Future of Intelligence; Dr Jonnie Penn and Maya Indira Ganesh, Course Co-Leads and Senior Research fellows, Centre for the Future of Intelligence.

i) Who will be part of the supervisory team?

The list of supervisors is being developed and will be finalised when we have applications with suggested dissertation topics. There are a wide range of potential supervisors within the University of Cambridge and we always try to match specialty, where possible.

5. Admissions

a) What is the standard entry requirement?

For full details please see our requirements tab [here](#). We are very used to considering professional experience alongside academic awards. If you do not meet the standard academic criteria, there is provision to consider ‘non-standard’ applications if you have appropriate professional experience.

b) I’m currently completing my undergraduate degree, will I be able to apply?

We will accept you onto the course on the basis that you meet the standard academic criteria; achieving these criteria (prior to the course start date) would therefore become a condition of entry to the course, and you will need to provide proof of this in the form of a transcript (in English) or certificate/official letter from the awarding institution.

c) When will interviews be held?

If your application is shortlisted for consideration for admission, then you will be interviewed before an offer of admission can be made. This is to ensure your academic background provides appropriate preparation, the research topic is suitable for part-time study and that you will be able to meet all the requirements of the course in terms of attendance and active involvement. It is anticipated that interviews will be held in May 2024.

d) How many people apply, and how many places will there be in the 2024-26 cohort?

This is an extremely popular course, and we anticipate strong demand for places again. In 2023, we received over 175 applications. In line with previous cohorts, we expect to have around 45-50 students on Cohort 4.

6. Applications

a) Who are you anticipating applications from?

The MSt is an academically rigorous part-time programme aimed at professionals from business, public, and social sectors working with AI. Although the course will be arranged so that those who are working can still participate, work experience is not required and recent graduates are also very welcome to apply. The curriculum will be arranged to ensure both technical and non-technical professionals can fully participate.

b) What is a personal statement?

Your personal statement should be around 500-600 words, stating your reasons for applying for the course and a summary of the most relevant experience or interest in relation to AI Ethics & Society. It is also useful to be able to demonstrate how you might balance part-time study in addition to other commitments.

c) How long should the sample of work be?

The sample of work should be no longer than 5,000 words, including references and bibliographies. Footnotes are not included in the 5,000-word count.

d) What references are required?

All applicants are required to provide two references. Although the online application form states that the references should be academic, we are very happy to accept two relevant up to date professional references (in lieu of academic references), especially if academic references are likely to be outdated.

The references should include relevant professional experience and a demonstrable commitment to, and aptitude for, advancing the ethical use of AI in society where possible. Professional references should be sent from a professional email address, wherever possible. If the referees have previously witnessed you combining study with work / excellent time management, this would also be worth including.

7. Fees & Funding

a) What fees and expenses will I be expected to pay for this course?

The fees for 2024-26 will be £23,706 for home students and £35,556 for overseas/EU students, payable in instalments over the two academic years. The combined graduate fee includes college membership. If you are accepted on this course, you will be allocated to one of our partner colleges, currently Hughes Hall, Lucy Cavendish and St Edmunds. You will be able to express a preference when you apply, although membership at your preferred college is not guaranteed.

You will be expected to cover the application fee (currently £50 online) and any costs of travel, accommodation and subsistence during residential sessions in Cambridge. Accommodation may be available in your college (at their standard rates), but this is subject to availability.

b) How can I obtain funding for this course?

We do not currently have any bursaries or scholarships for this course. We encourage all applicants to explore funding before applying for the course.

You can find sources of government funding and financial support - including Professional and Career Development Loans - [here](#).

For information on a loan from Student Finance England for course fees and a contribution towards living costs, please see [here](#).

8. College membership

a) What is a college?

The University of Cambridge is a collegiate university, and all its students are members of a college, with access to associated facilities (including libraries, grounds, sporting facilities etc.). College life includes formal and informal social events, membership of the college MCR (Middle Common Room, postgraduate society) and helps support both pastoral and academic aspects of your study for the duration of your course.

b) Is there a partner college for this MSt?

The partner colleges for the MSt in AI Ethics and Society are [Hughes Hall](#), [Lucy Cavendish](#) and [St Edmunds](#) at present. You will become a matriculated member of one of these colleges. In order to create a sense of cohort and have maximum benefit from the Programme, all students will be allocated evenly across colleges. Other colleges may be used, to provide teaching space for the residentials.

c) Can I choose to be a member at a different college?

Each MSt programme partners with specific colleges in order to provide the best possible student experience and create a sense of cohort. If you have a prior relationship with a Cambridge college other than the ones listed above (e.g. you are an alumnus/na of the college), you may be able to⁴ obtain membership with them. In such cases, you would be responsible for approaching that College to request membership.

9. Further study

a) Does CFI offer a path to a PhD in this subject?

CFI does not currently offer a path to a PhD in this subject. We hope to be able to offer a PhD however, in the coming years. In the meantime, we work with other departments in Cambridge, including Engineering, History and Philosophy of Science, Politics, and Philosophy to provide a route to continued academic study.