

FAQs for Applicants

1. Can international students apply to join SOFI² CDT?

Yes, we welcome applications from international candidates. Current UKRI (UK Research and Innovation) rules allow us to recruit international students with a limit of no more than 30% of the total cohort. It is expected that places for international students will be highly competitive.

2. Are applicants from the EU classed as international?

Yes. Since the UK has now left the EU, citizens of the EU, EEA and Switzerland citizens are classed as international. Republic of Ireland (ROI) applicants will have their fee status assessed depending on residency and may qualify to be treated as UK/home students once that assessment has been made.

3. I am an EU citizen with UK pre-settled/settled status – am I an international student?

If you are a citizen of the EU, EEA or Switzerland and have been granted pre-settled or settled status in the UK then you are able to apply as a UK student. Such applicants do not count towards the cohort limit of 30% international students. When completing the application form, you are required to provide information around your nationality/residency and from this information your fee status is determined upon submission of the application. You should select pre-settled/settled status on the application form and the admissions team will consider you for Home fees status as quickly as possible. If you disagree with your assigned fee status you can request a fee status assessment review.

4. Are international students eligible for a CDT studentship?

Yes. All individuals, including international candidates, applying to SOFI² CDT are eligible to receive a UKRI-funded studentship. The studentship includes the standard UKRI stipend (living allowance), university fees and a contribution towards research costs, including travel for training/conferences.

5. Do international students have to pay a higher level fees than UK student?

No. International applicants will not be required to pay a higher level of fees than UK students, or EU students with settled/pre-settled status. All SOFI² CDT students, including international students, pay the same level of fees and funding to pay those fees is included in the CDT studentship.

6. When should I choose my PhD project?

All SOFI² CDT students spend the first six months participating in a bespoke CDT training programme. During this time the entire cohort of students will be based at Durham University but will also visit the Universities of Leeds and Edinburgh for 3 week-long training periods. Students are only asked to choose a project at the end of this initial 6-month training programme.

7. Can international students choose projects at all of the SOFI² CDT universities?

Yes. International students can choose a project at Durham, Leeds or Edinburgh University. However, international students require a student visa to study in the UK and this has some implications for international students joining SOFI² CDT. All UK SOFI² CDT students are initially registered as students at Durham University and, if after six months they choose a project at the University of Leeds or Edinburgh, their registration is transferred to their new host university. This is not possible for international students. An international student cannot transfer to another university without applying for a new student visa. This is an expensive and time-consuming process and is not practical. When SOFI² CDT would like to make an offer to an international applicant, the applicant will be asked to choose which of the three SOFI² CDT Universities (Durham, Leeds or Edinburgh) they would like to be based for their PhD project. This will limit the student's choice of projects to the projects hosted at their chosen university, although international students are free to choose from all of the available projects at their chosen university.

8. As an international student, if I choose to be based at the University of Leeds or Edinburgh, can I still participate in the initial six-month training programme based at Durham University?

Yes. All SOFI² CDT students participate in the initial six-month training programme. As an international student registered at the University of Leeds or Edinburgh, you will be given visitor status at Durham University and you will be based in Durham for the first six months, along with the rest of the cohort.

9. When will the full list of available projects be published?

SOFI² CDT will recruit a scientifically diverse cohort of students with a variety of research interests and first degrees. Students do not choose a project at the point of entry, but do so after the initial six month training programme. It is important that the range of projects offered to the cohort is appropriate for the interests of the students recruited. It is also important that there is plenty of choice to ensure that all students have more than one viable project option. For a typical cohort of 16 students, we would expect to offer at least 24 projects. Since we do not know the scientific background/interests of the new cohort until the students have been recruited, we cannot choose a full list of projects before the recruitment process starts. However, to give applicants some idea of what projects will be available 10-15 projects will be posted on the SOFI² CDT website before the first student application deadline on November 28th 2021. Further projects will be added to the list in early spring February/March 2022, when the first recruitment round is complete and to coincide with the second student application deadline. However, the full list of PhD opportunities may not be finalised before the new cohort arrive in late September 2022.