

CSHP CDT Open Day

Common questions during the Q&A sessions

Questions on eligibility and application procedure:

Q: What kind of academic background are you looking for?

We are looking for people with a background in synthetic chemistry with a sustainability interest – ideally with prior involvement in a project in synthetic organic chemistry.

Q: What are you looking for in a personal statement? A more professional or a personal approach?

Both – we are interested in the candidate's suitability and motivation for the programme, project and pursuing a graduate degree, and how their experience so far reflects that.

Q: Do I need to submit one personal statement per project or one statement that encompasses them all?

We ask that you submit one personal statement with your CDT application that encompasses all project choices, including your motivation, fit for the programme, experience and project choice list.

Q: Can you list three projects at Oxford and three at York?

No - for fairness in terms of application to the programme, it's appropriate to apply to a maximum of three projects, which could be all at one institution or a balance between the two.

Q: Is there any incentive to list 3 projects or is it acceptable to list one or two favourites because a lot of them are quite different?

As we progress through the recruitment process, some projects may be removed from the available list as they are allocated. From that perspective, it's a good idea to list 3 projects so that you have multiple opportunities. Having said that, if you really do feel there's only one or two that that you'd like to pick, then that's fine as well.

Q: If you apply for the January deadline, will the candidates be given notice of any projects that are unavailable, i.e., already recruited from the November round?

Yes. Once the projects have been allocated, they will be removed from the list of projects available on our website. Shortlisted candidates in the January round who have applied for those will be notified and given a chance to amend their project choices.

Q: If you're applying for the November deadline, when will shortlisted candidates be notified if they're being interviewed?

We are aiming to send interview invites to shortlisted candidates around 29-30 November. This will allow candidates to prepare for the panel interview and also organise and attend the project meetings ahead of it.

Q: Do I need to contact supervisors before application submission?

No – it is not necessary to contact supervisors before submitting your application. However, you are more than welcome to do so if you wish, to express your interest in a particular project or seek more information about it.

General questions about funding:

Q: Are international students eligible for CSHP CDT studentship funding, or must they bring funding from other scholarships for which they are eligible for?

The programme accepts applications from international students and is able to offer full funding within the limits set by UKRI (up to 30% of funded places can be allocated to international students). However, due to the course fee level associated to international students, it is recommended that you also consider applying for a scholarship (university or externally) that would cover for the difference in course fees.

Q: Will there be any assistance for accommodation during the taught course for those students who are not at the primary institution?

Yes – accommodation costs will be covered by the CDT during the taught course at either Oxford or York for CSHP CDT students not at their primary institution. There will also be organisational help in providing where that accommodation will be.

Questions about the interview:

Q: What is the interview process like?

All CDT interviews will be held online. Shortlisted candidates will be invited to a 40-minute panel interview, where they will be asked to present a few slides on a research project they have been involved in, either at university or in industry. We're interested in how you talk about that project, not necessarily the outcome (yields, etc). You'll also be asked to prepare another presentation on one of a choice of papers from the literature. This will be followed by questions on your motivation for the CDT and the projects you've applied for. Lastly, there will be synthetic organic chemistry technical problems, which might involve pen and paper and holding that up to a screen.

As part of the CDT interview process, there's also a chance to meet with the supervisors of the projects you have selected.

Q: Is the interview completed all in one day?

Yes, the actual interview is completed all in 1 x 40 minute online session, but the chats with the supervisors may be on a different day. We would like the candidates to meet with the prospective supervisors before the panel interview takes place.

General questions about the CSHP CDT programme:

Q: Is the CDT only related to the sustainability or are there some fundamental science projects available?

Projects available on the CDT will be focused on fundamental science, advancing the frontiers of the subject through cutting edge science with a sustainable approach.

Q: What are the employment opportunities after this course?

Very broad - both Oxford and York have excellent track records for future employment of PhDs. Students tend to go on either to postdoctoral research positions that may lead to an academic career or industry or into appropriate industry positions as a chemist; other career paths include education, consultancy or patent law.