

**UWE
Bristol**

University
of the
West of
England

Cyber Security

Computer Science
Research Centre

UWEcyber

31st October 2023



Gold Award



in association with

National Cyber
Security Centre



Department for
Science, Innovation
& Technology

Academic Centre of Excellence in **Cyber Security Education**

UWEcyber

UWEcyber was recognised by National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) as one of the first Academic Centres of Excellence in Cyber Security Education (ACE-CSE) in December 2020, for our commitment to teaching and learning, outreach and external industry engagement.

Our MSc Cyber Security has been [NCSC-certified](#) since it started in 2018.

Our Degree Apprenticeship with Gloucestershire College is the only NCSC-certified programme in England and Wales.

Our undergraduate programme is to be submitted for certification in 2024 following module redesign.



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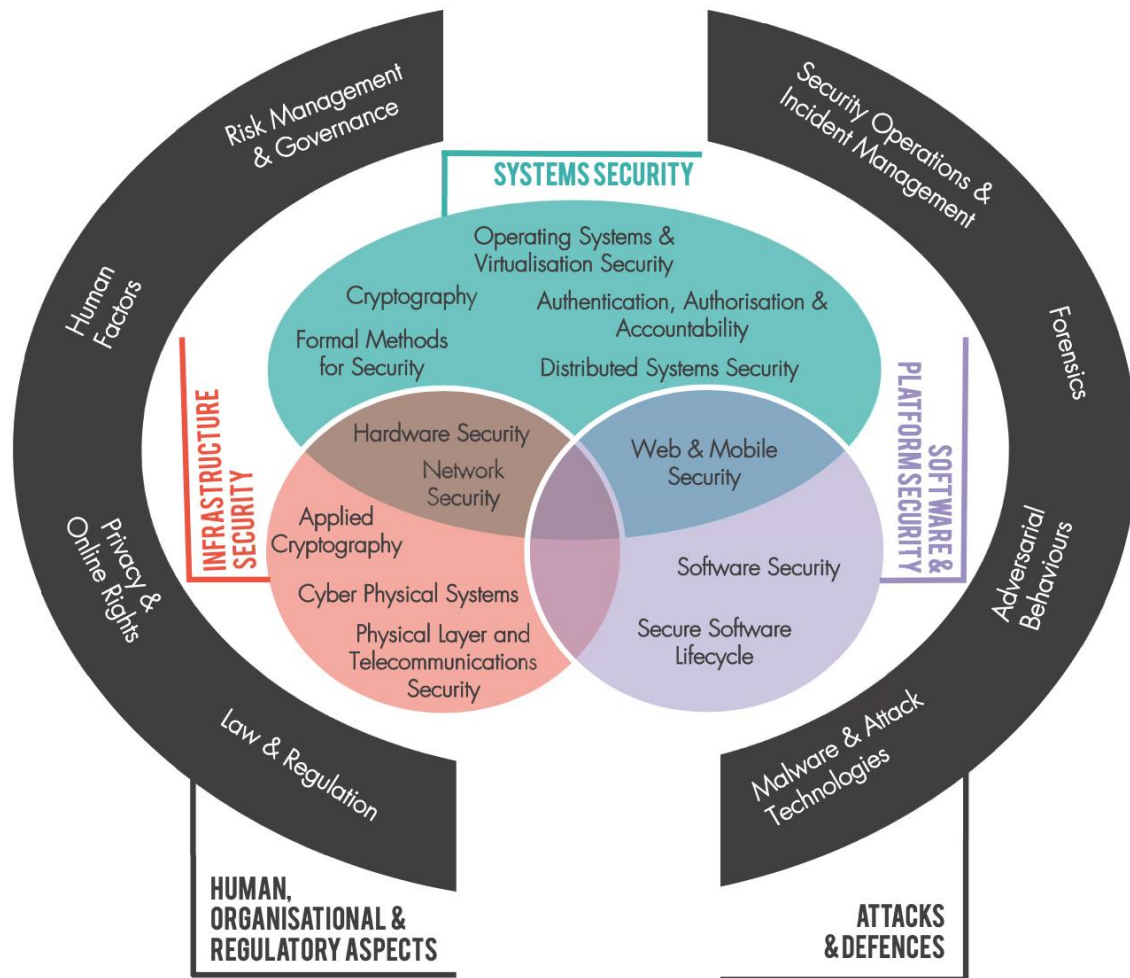
CyBOK

NCSC Framework for what constitutes a Cyber Security Body of Knowledge.

Recent recognition of two new supplementary guides:

- Security and Privacy of AI
- AI for Security

All activity within our theme sits within one or more CyBOK Knowledge Areas.



UWEcyber Research Strategy

Software, Cloud and Infrastructure Security

Container-based, Software Security, IoT, CAV, Hardware

Cyber Security Data Analytics

ML for Security, Security of ML, Explainable AI, Privacy, Transparency and Trust

Cyber Crime and Domestic Cyber Security

Online Harms, Forensic Analysis, Dark Web, Financial Crime

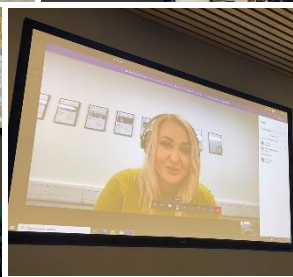
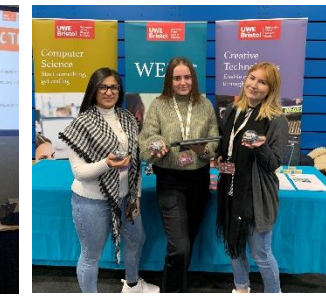
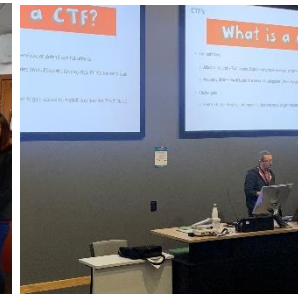
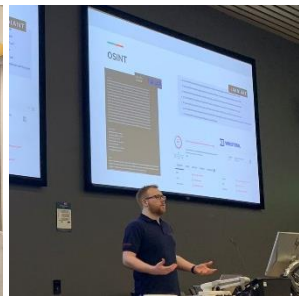
Pedagogical Research for Cyber Security

Effective interactive methods for teaching and learning



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Staff Profiles and Research

Research Staff Members



Cyber Threat Intelligence in Industry 4.0

- Current research: Cyber Threat Intelligence in Distributed Environments
- PhD supervision: Digital Twins-based Advanced Persistent Threats in Smart Manufacturing Environments
 - PhD candidate: Ms. Carol Lok Yi Lo
- Publications
 - C.Lo, TY.Win, Z.Rezaeifar, Z.Khan, P.Legg, 2023, "Digital Twins in Industry 4.0 Cyber Security". Submitted to the IEEE Smart World Congress 2023, Portsmouth, United Kingdom.



Dr Thomas Win
Thomas.Win@uwe.ac.uk

Low Resource Virtualisation Security

- What does that mean?
 - Containerisation and similar virtualisation tech
- Why is it important?
 - Because of their real world usage ->
- What am I doing?
 - Focus on real world security
 - Vulnerability analysis in Computers and Security
 - Visualisation software in IEEE CSR



Alan Mills
Alan.Mills@uwe.ac.uk



Lockheed Martin in November conducted a flight test mission featuring distributed processing onboard a U-2 via the Kubernetes software containerisation technology. Kubernetes, for military applications, will enable weapon systems to pool onboard computing power to meet advanced system and software needs on demand. (Lockheed Martin)

<https://www.janes.com/defence-news/news-detail/lockheed-martin-conducts-u-2-flight-with-kubernetes-software-containerisation-technology>

CySec and DFIR Research



Gareth Davies

Senior Academic & Researcher

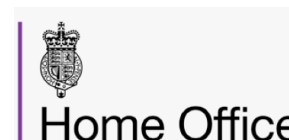
Forensics Consultant

First Forensic Forum (F3) Chairman

UK Digital Forensics Specialist Group

Criminal Justice Board (Digital Evidence)

Interpol DF & Car Cyber Threat Expert Group



- Interests include:**
- ☐ HDD Physical and Logical Restoration
 - ☐ Embedded Device Data Recovery
 - ☐ NAND Flash Technology
 - ☐ Cars (JDM mostly)
 - ☐ Vehicle Systems Analysis
 - ☐ Fundraising for Charity (Mountains / Hiking)

Recent Research Output:

Digital Investigator Journal:

'Defining User Requirements and Technical Specifications to Assist with Effective Validation of Digital Forensics methods.'

in conjunction with UK Government (FCN) and Kings College London.

19th International Conference on Cyber Warfare and Security (ICCWS 2024): **'A.I. Lifecycle Forensics', 'Who Controls The Future of A.I.?' (CySec perspective)**

& **'Resilience, Dependability and Security'** (CySec skills shortage)



Gareth Davies

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Protection in Armed conflicts: Security for vulnerable data

- **Area of research:** protection of personal data in a digital form during armed conflicts – case study Ukraine.
- **Main aim:** to investigate public attitudes towards cyberattacks in relation to privacy and data security through engaging with those Ukrainians who: who: 1) live in Ukraine, 2) are temporarily living in the UK, and 3) are permanently settled in the UK but have family connections in Ukraine.
- **Impact:** To develop and disseminate an evidence-based human-centric framework on cybersecurity and data protection during armed conflict.



Dr Aida Abzhaparova
Aida2.Abzhaparova@uwe.ac.uk

Research Topics

- Internet of Things (IoT) and Cyber Security
- Advanced Machine Learning and IoT/Smart City applications
- Mobile and Wireless Networks
- Distributed Systems and Network Security
- Smart builds and smart transportation

Publications:

<https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=B0rtByAAAAAJ&hl=en>



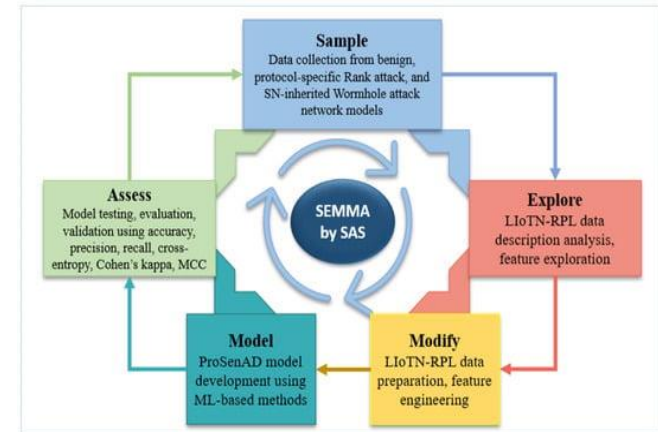
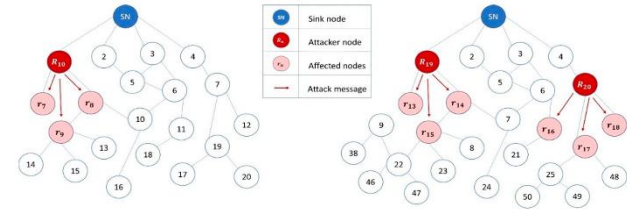
Dr Djamel Djenouri
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Cyber Attacks Detection and Mitigation Approaches in Smart City Technologies (Cloud and IoT)

- My research focuses on cloud and IoT security in smart cities and recently I have been working on Routing Protocol for Low-power and Lossy Networks (RPL).
- For networks with limited resources, such as IoT-enabled smart homes, smart industrial equipment, and urban infrastructures, the Routing Protocol for Low-power and Lossy Networks (RPL) was developed.
- The lack of active security features in RPL makes them vulnerable to attacks. The types of attacks include protocol-specific ones and those inherited by wireless sensor networks.
- In our latest research we developed a security approach to improve the security against PS-R attacks as well as SN-W attacks. Our model is developed based on multiclass classification approaches and it effectively detects attacks sensor inherited RPL attacks in comparison to the related research contributions.
- My upcoming research focuses more on developing cloud security approaches for smart cities to protect data-in-motion.



Dr Sarfraz Brohi
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Recent publication: Zahra, F.; Jhanjhi, N.Z.; Khan, N.A.; Brohi, S.N.; Masud, M.; Aljahdali, S. Protocol-Specific and Sensor Network-Inherited Attack Detection in IoT Using Machine Learning. Appl. Sci. 2022, 12, 11598. <https://doi.org/10.3390/app122211598>

Cyber Security Research

- **PhD students' projects**
 - **Graph-based group anomaly detection in IoT with deep learning** : in this project, we look at graph-based method that leverage deep learning approaches to detect group anomaly (*PhD student: Dalila Khettaf Supervisors: Djamel Djenouri and Zeinab Rezaeifar*)
 - **Design a Secure Digital Twin to Detect and Mitigate Advanced Persistent Threats on Cyber-Physical Systems in Smart Manufacturing**: in this project, we are exploring a secure method based on Digital Twin to detect and mitigate Advanced Persistent Threats (APTs). (*PhD student: Lok Yi Lo (Carol) Supervisors: Thomas Win, Phil Legg, Zaheer Khan, and Zeinab Rezaeifar*)
- **BTIIC-Situation Awareness**
 - It is a part of BT Ireland Innovation Centre (BTIIC) project which is funded by Invest Northern Ireland and representing major partnership between BT and Ulster University. The aim of the Situation Awareness project is to reconstruct and detect multi-step attack scenarios (APT attacks) through automated correlation of alert data. (April 2020-Present)(RA: Zeinab Rezaeifar ([BT Ireland Innovation Centre \(ulster.ac.uk\)](https://www.ulster.ac.uk/))



Dr Zeinab Rezaeifar
Zeinab.Rezaeifar@uwe.ac.uk

Federated Learning

Collaborative machine learning, training a shared model without exchanging private data

- **Application of FL to cyber security domain**
- **Security of FL mechanisms**

Container Security

Tools & techniques to secure infrastructure, images, & runtime environment of Docker

- **Visualisation of threats**
- **Analysis of threats over time**

Network-based Anomaly Detection

Identifying abnormal network traffic indicating malware or unauthorised access

- **Detection and remediation of Home IoT threats**



Jonathan White

Jonathan6.White@uwe.ac.uk

White, J. and Legg, P. (2023a). Federated Learning: Data Privacy and Cyber Security in Edge-Based Machine Learning. In *Data Protection in a Post-Pandemic Society: Laws, Regulations, Best Practices and Recent Solutions* (pp. 169-193). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

White, J. and Legg, P. (2023b) Evaluating Data Distribution Strategies in Federated Learning: A Trade-off Analysis between Privacy and Performance for IoT Security. *9th International Conference on Cyber Security, Privacy in Communication Networks (ICCS) 2023 (Under Review)*

White, J., & Legg, P. (2021). Unsupervised one-class learning for anomaly detection on home IoT network devices. In *2021 International Conference on Cyber Situational Awareness (CyberSA)*.

Dr. Andrew McCarthy – Senior Lecturer

Research Interests

Methods for improving Robustness against adversarial Machine learning Attacks.

Evasion attacks on Intrusion Detection Systems

Secure and Safer Machine Learning Models

Supported Decision Making



Research outputs

[Functionality-Preserving Adversarial Machine Learning for Robust Classification in Cybersecurity and Intrusion Detection Domains: A Survey](#)

A McCarthy, E Ghadafi, P Andriotis, P Legg

Journal of Cybersecurity and Privacy 2 (1), 154-190

[Feature Vulnerability and Robustness Assessment against Adversarial Machine Learning Attacks](#)

A McCarthy, P Andriotis, E Ghadafi, P Legg

2021 International Conference on Cyber Situational Awareness, Data Analytics ...

[GRAIMATTER Green Paper: Recommendations for disclosure control of trained Machine Learning \(ML\) models from Trusted Research Environments \(TREs\)](#)

E Jefferson, J Liley, M Malone, S Reel, A Crespi-Boixader, X Kerasidou, ...

[Shouting Through Letterboxes: A study on attack susceptibility of voice assistants](#)

A McCarthy, BR Gaster, P Legg

2020 International Conference on Cyber Security and Protection of Digital ...

[Defending against adversarial machine learning attacks using hierarchical learning: A case study on network traffic attack classification](#)

A McCarthy, E Ghadafi, P Andriotis, P Legg

Journal of Information Security and Applications 72, 103398

[Safe machine learning model release from Trusted Research Environments: The AI-SDC package](#)

J Smith, R Preen, A McCarthy, AC Boixander, J Liley, S Rogers



Dr Andrew McCarthy

Andrew6.McCarthy@uwe.ac.uk

Cyber Forensic Research



**Jay Murphy – Programme leader and Senior Lecturer
BSc – Cyber Security and Digital Forensics.**

SYTECH
DIGITAL FORENSICS



Developing research interests

Dynamic crime scene triage, Dark web(DW)
Investigations and mobile device forensics.



Research output

Social Media and Dark Web analysis for Digital Investigations:
Contextualising Dark Web Investigations (House, Murphy, Legg – In progress/2023)



DPhil - 2024

Lifting the Fog of War: Preserving Digital Fingerprints on the modern battlefield

This project aims to confront the challenges and add to the body of knowledge of digital forensic practices conducted on the modern battlefield, specifically to identify, preserve, maintain and leverage evidence that will be used in the prosecution of war crimes committed during armed conflicts.



Jay Murphy
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Team, B.I. (2022) *Tracking the Faceless Killers who Mutilated and Executed a Ukrainian POW* bellingscat. 5 August 2022 [online]. Available from: <https://www.bellingscat.com/news/2022/08/05/tracking-the-faceless-killers-who-mutilated-and-executed-a-ukrainian-pow/> [Accessed 29 October 2023].

(Bellingscat, 2022)

A secure routing approach based on league championship algorithm for wireless body sensor networks in healthcare.

This research work introduced a secure routing approach for wireless body sensor networks in healthcare, aiming to balance energy efficiency and security. The approach employs the league championship algorithm for cluster head selection and utilizes both symmetric and asymmetric encryption for intra-cluster and inter-cluster secure connections. Simulation results demonstrate its efficiency in terms of energy consumption, delay, throughput, packet delivery rate, and packet loss rate.

[Hosseinzadeh, M., Mohammed, A. H., Rahmani, A. M., A Alenizi, F., Zandavi, S. M., Yousefpoor, E., ...Tightiz, L. \(2023\). A secure routing approach based on league championship algorithm for wireless body sensor networks in healthcare. PLoS ONE, 18\(10\), Article e0290119. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0290119>. Available from <https://uwe-repository.worktribe.com/output/11149364>](#)



Dr Mazhar Malik
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Cyber Security Data Analytics

How to make effective real-time decisions to manage Cyber Security challenges and threats, informed by both human and machine operators?

Cyber Security

Data
VisualisationMachine
Learning

Recent Funded projects:

- InnovateUK - Transforming Suspicious Activity Reports
- DSTL - Decision Support in Military Cyber Operations
- DSTL - Human-as-a-Sensor for Mitigating Cyber Threats
- DSTL - Autonomous Resilience for Cyber Defence

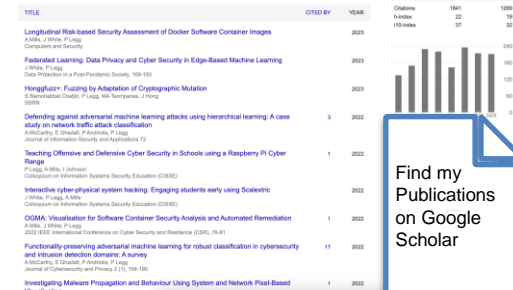


Professor Phil Legg
Phil.Legg@uwe.ac.uk

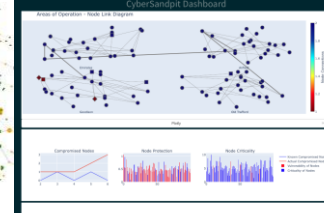
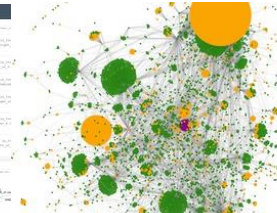
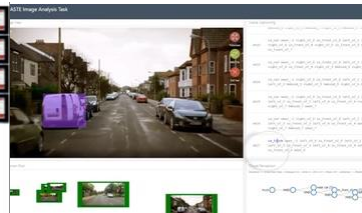


Phil Legg

Professor in Cyber Security, University of the West of England
Verified email at uwe.ac.uk · [ORCID](#)
cyber security · machine learning · visual analytics



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PhD Students

PhD Students



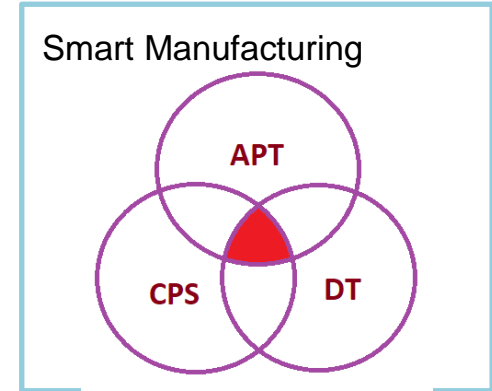
Carol Lo

PhD: Design of a secure digital twin to detect and mitigate advanced persistent threats on cyber-physical systems in Smart Manufacturing



Background

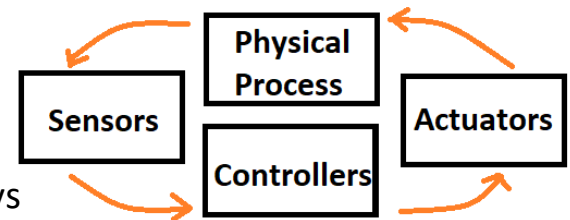
- Academic journey
 - MSc Cyber Security, graduated in March 2022
 - PhD research degree, since April 2023
 - Advanced Persistent Threats (APT), Cyber Physical Systems (CPS) and Digital Twins (DT)
- Enjoyable moments
 - Poster paper presented in IEEE Smart World in August
 - Collaborating with an undergraduate on a research project on lightweight testbed for attack simulation
 - Learning how Cyber Physical Systems are constructed and how they could be manipulated by attackers



Siemens Festo CP Lab at 1Z005

Implications of APT Attacks on CPS

- Characteristics of Advanced Persistent Threats (APT)
 - Objectives: cyber espionage, disrupt operations
 - Strategies: stealthy, prolonged, multi-steps attack, customised tools
 - Targets: specific, high-profile organisations, critical infrastructure systems
- Cyber Physical Systems (CPS)
 - Embedded systems directly interact with the physical world through sensors, controllers and actuators
 - Examples of APT attacks on Cyber-Physical Systems (CPS)
 - 2015 – Ukraine power grid – power outages affecting >230,000 people
 - 2021 – Colonial Pipeline – shut down fuel supply for 6 days



Use of Digital Twins to Address Research Limitations

- Research aim
 - Design secure digital twins of cyber-physical systems to mitigate and detect stealthy and multi-stage APT attacks
- Research limitations
 - Attack detection often focus on specific system vulnerabilities or attack techniques
 - Limited understanding of attack stages
 - A notable shortage of APT-specific datasets for Machine Learning (ML) tools
- Potential use of digital twins
 - Replicate real-time data to DT from its physical twin for intrusion detection
 - Correlate signs of intrusion to understand the attack stage for better response
 - Simulate attack on digital twins and collect synthetic data for improving ML tools

James Barrett

PhD: Interactive machine learning for
identifying threats to security and
service in large-scale mobile networks



Background Profile

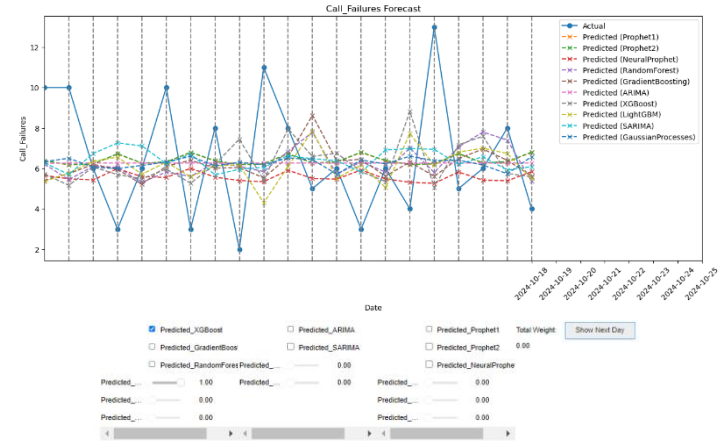
- My PhD is in **interactive machine learning for identifying threats to security and service in large scale mobile networks.**
- I am a 2nd year postgraduate researcher and PhD student here at UWE.
- We are working in partnership with Ribbon Communications to align with the telecommunications industry in research outcomes.
- I studied a BSc in Applied Computing Technologies and an MSc in Cybersecurity.
- I was a lecturer at Plymouth university teaching years 1-3 of the cybersecurity and applied computing programmes.
- I have around 6 years of experience in open-source development both as a professional and hobbyist.



My Research; then done!

- I am currently focused on a research contribution in the field of **interactive time series forecasting**.
- My objective is to publish the results of my experimentation with **interactive dynamic model interrogation and calibration**, over traditional industry forecasting measures.
- Our hypothesis is that a **human-machine teaming** approach to IML leads to strong and more robust forecasts with better outcomes for **external unknown events** in time series.
- So far, we have built an expansive review of interactive, explainable ML literature and furthered this process by completing synthetically replicated real world data to drive new IML experimentation.

Date: 2024-10-18
Actual Cell_Failures: 4



Call Failures Forecast with Ensemble Models



Metrics for the Last Day:
RMSE: 2.78
MAE: 2.78

$$RMSE = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (\hat{y}_i - y_i)^2}{n}}$$

We choose RMSE here as our EM to make active model reconfigurations upon.

Sadegh Bamohabbat Chafjiri

PhD: Fuzzing by adapting cryptanalytic techniques and game theory



Background

- A postgraduate researcher at the University of the West of England, specializing in vulnerability assessment and software testing. His Ph.D. focuses on an AI-enabled software security framework, with an emphasis on fuzz testing.
- With a background in entrepreneurship and IT management, Sadeqh holds a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering and two master's degrees in telecommunication engineering, specializing in cryptography and IT management with a data analytics focus.
- He has extensive experience in security engineering, data analytics, AI-enabled solutions, and the Internet of Things. Leveraging his expertise, Sadeqh has consistently delivered innovative solutions in software security and sustainable infrastructures.



Software Testing



Cybersecurity
Analytics



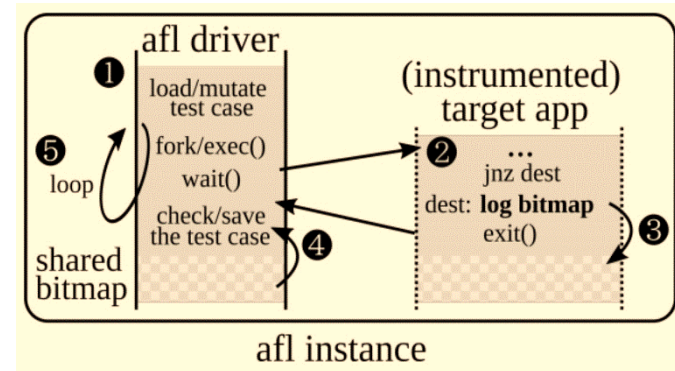
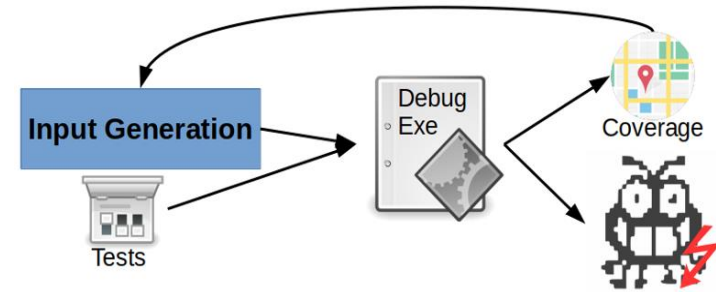
Security
Engineering and
Cryptography



Game Theory and
Optimisation
Techniques

Transferable and AI-enabled software security framework

Recent cyber security incidents like "Wannacry" underscore the importance of proactive program analysis to detect software vulnerabilities. Vulnerability discovery methodologies involve analysing software either statically or dynamically to identify weaknesses. These weaknesses can be exploited by attackers to unauthorisedly access or compromise systems. In the 90s, "fuzzing," a novel vulnerability detection method for UNIX systems, was introduced. Fuzzers use random input (invalid data) to discover vulnerabilities. Fuzz testing is a critical technique for finding zero-day vulnerabilities and is gaining popularity in the cybersecurity community. My research project explores a transferable Machine Learning-based framework's feasibility and effectiveness for efficient fuzz testing in diverse systems



Dalila Khettaf

PhD: Graph-based group anomaly
detection in IoT with Deep Learning



Anomalies!

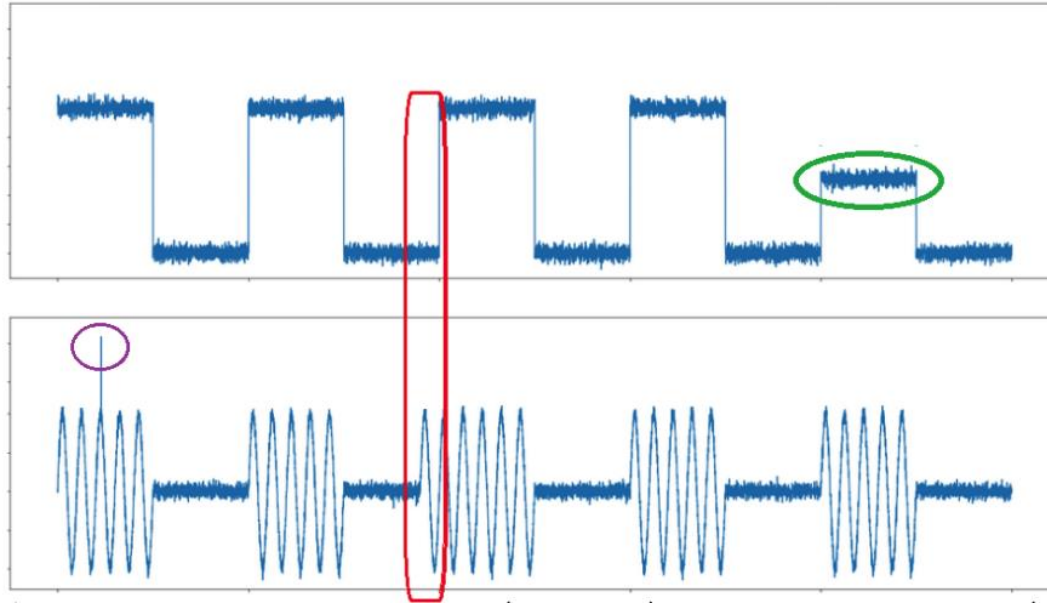


Figure 1: The three anomaly types (Audibert et al, 2022)

Audibert, J., Michiardi, P., Guyard, F., Marti, S., & Zuluaga, M. A. (2022). Do deep neural networks contribute to multivariate time series anomaly detection?. *Pattern Recognition*, 132, 108945.

Collective anomalies

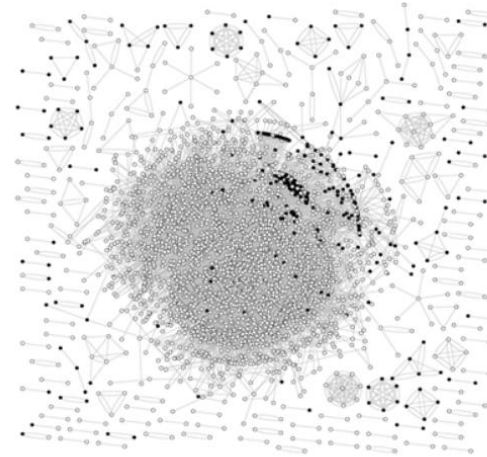
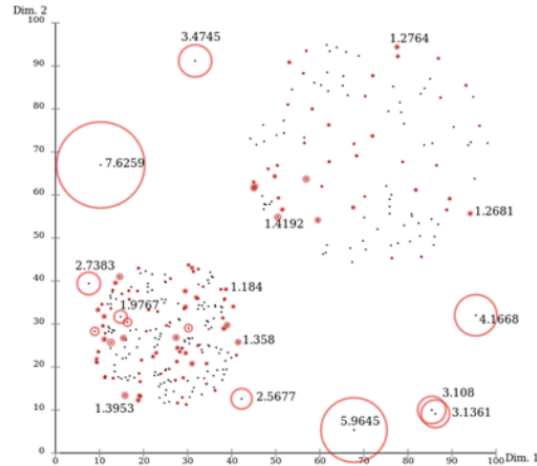


Figure 2: Point Vs group anomalies

Great potential

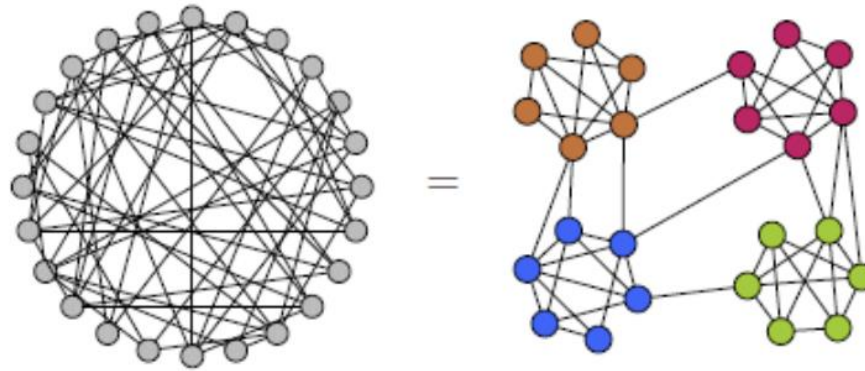


Figure 4: Graphs for group anomaly detection

Tahmassebi, A., Pinker-Domenig, K., Wengert, G., Lobbes, M., Stadlbauer, A., Wildburger, N. C., ... & Meyer-Bäse, A. (2017, May). The driving regulators of the connectivity protein network of brain malignancies. In *Smart Biomedical and Physiological Sensor Technology XIV* (Vol. 10216, pp. 8-15). SPIE.

Aimen Djemaa

PhD: Adversarial Machine Learning
Attacks on Federated Learning Models



Background

- **Academic:**
 - BSc Information System and Software Engineer, Graduated November 2020.
 - PM Science, Graduated 2021.
 - MSc Cyber Security, Graduated in June 2023.
 - PhD Computer Science, since October 2023.
- **Professional:**
 - Summer Research Internship at UWE 2022: "Redactable Blockchain".
 - In process of submitting a paper: "Hybrid Outlier Clustering Method for IDS".

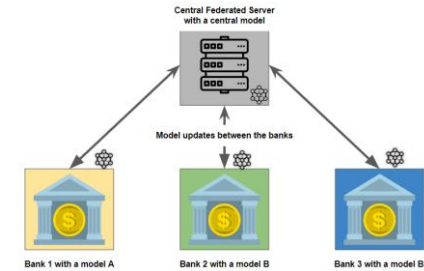
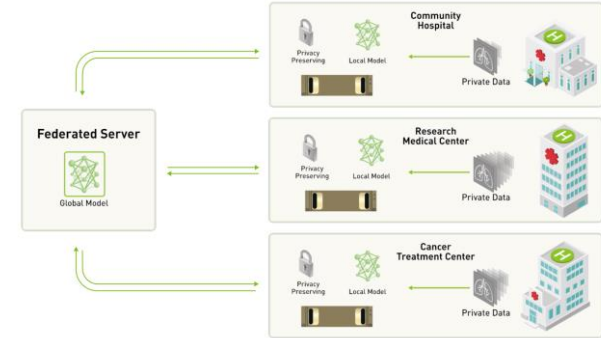
Federated Learning

- What is FL?

It is a machine learning approach allows multiple parties to collaborate in building a shared ML model while data decentralised and private.

- Applications of FL:

- Healthcare and Medical Records.
- Financial Services.
- Retail and E-commerce.



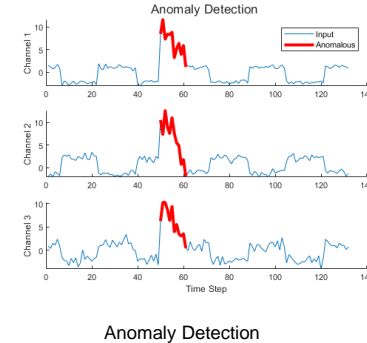
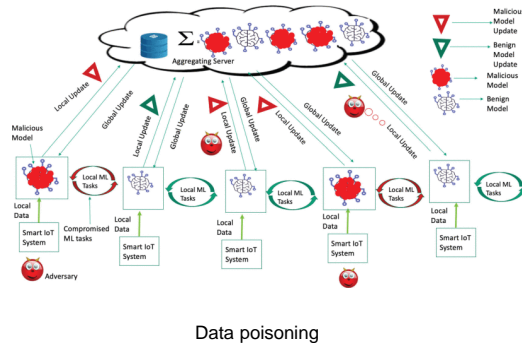
Federated Learning and Cyber Security.

- Cyber Security for Federated Learning:

It involves implementing security measures and protocols to protect the privacy, integrity and confidentiality of data and models before, during and after the learning process.

- Federated Learning for Cyber Security:

It involves implementing federated learning techniques to improve security measures. FL can be applied to detect and respond to cyber threats.



Discussion

Collaborative opportunities?