

# Stacked Ensemble Learning-Enabled Early Prediction of MBIST Area and Test Time in Complex Memory IPs

## SEEL4824 Final Year Project Part II

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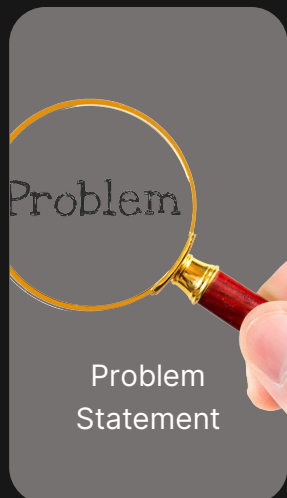
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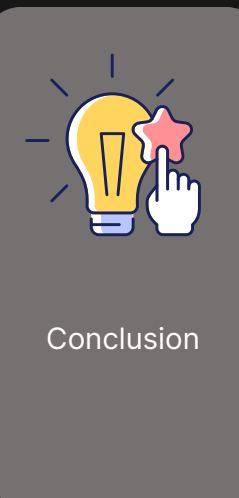
# Outlines



Up to  
**21.2x**  
more accurate area prediction

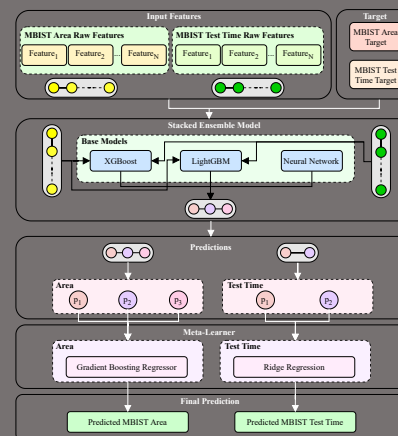
Up to  
**20x**  
more accurate test time prediction

Up to  
**8x**  
more reliable in ablation study



## Ensemble Learning

### Stacked Ensemble Architecture

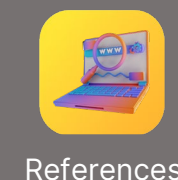


Literature Review

Research Methodology



## Feature Engineering



# Project Background

MBIST is essential, but it comes with a COST.

**70%**

memory dominates SoC area

In modern chips, memory blocks like SRAM and register files can take up more than 70% of the total area [1-3].

**66%**

MBIST leads in DFT overhead

MBIST makes up around 66% of the total test logic. It's the biggest contributor to DFT area [4, 5].

**Slow**

traditional metrics estimation

Both MBIST area and test time are only available after RTL is converted into a gate-level netlist [6-9].

**Early**

prediction by machine learning

Machine learning models can estimate MBIST impact early using only RTL-level data, without full synthesis [5, 10].

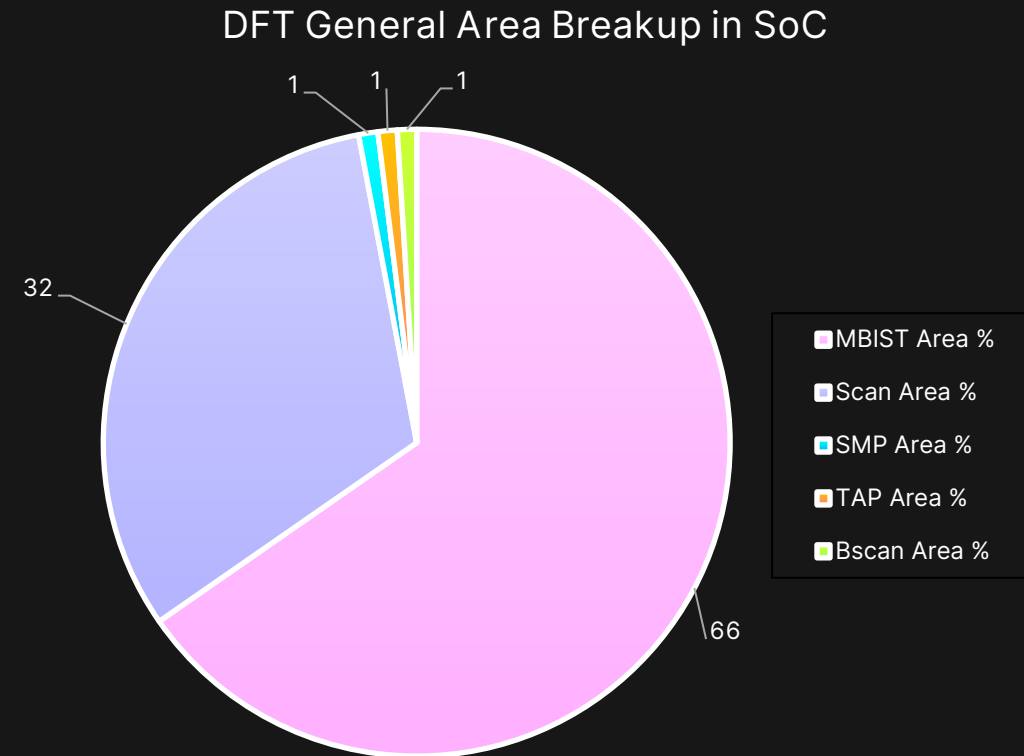


Figure 1: Area distribution of DFT components in an SoC [5].

# Problem Statements

Designers still lack of RELIABLE tools for early MBIST estimation.

**Late**

accurate metrics generation

Both MBIST area and test time are measurable after synthesis and pattern generation [11].

**Slow**

design iteration

Changing MBIST settings to meet the constraints means repeating insertion and synthesis. This slows down the design cycle [5, 7, 12].

**Hard**

to make early decisions

Without early estimates, it's hard to compare MBIST configurations or balance area and time [13-16].

**Lack**

of scalable existing models

Most existing ML methods don't handle real SoC designs with complex memory IPs using vital features [14, 15, 17-19].

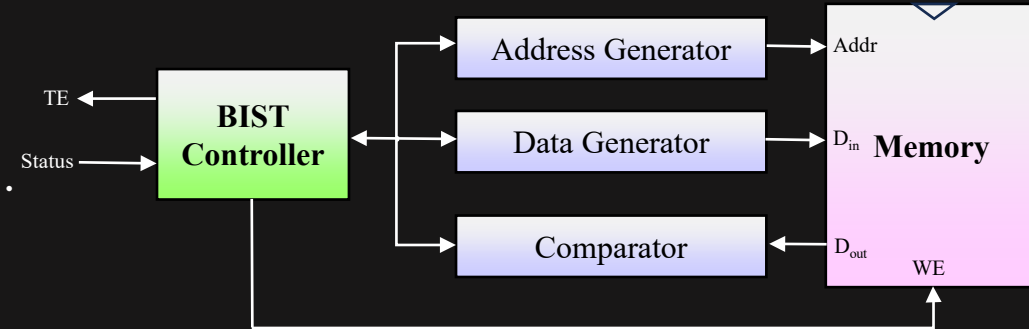


Figure 2: The simplified architecture of an MBIST system [2].

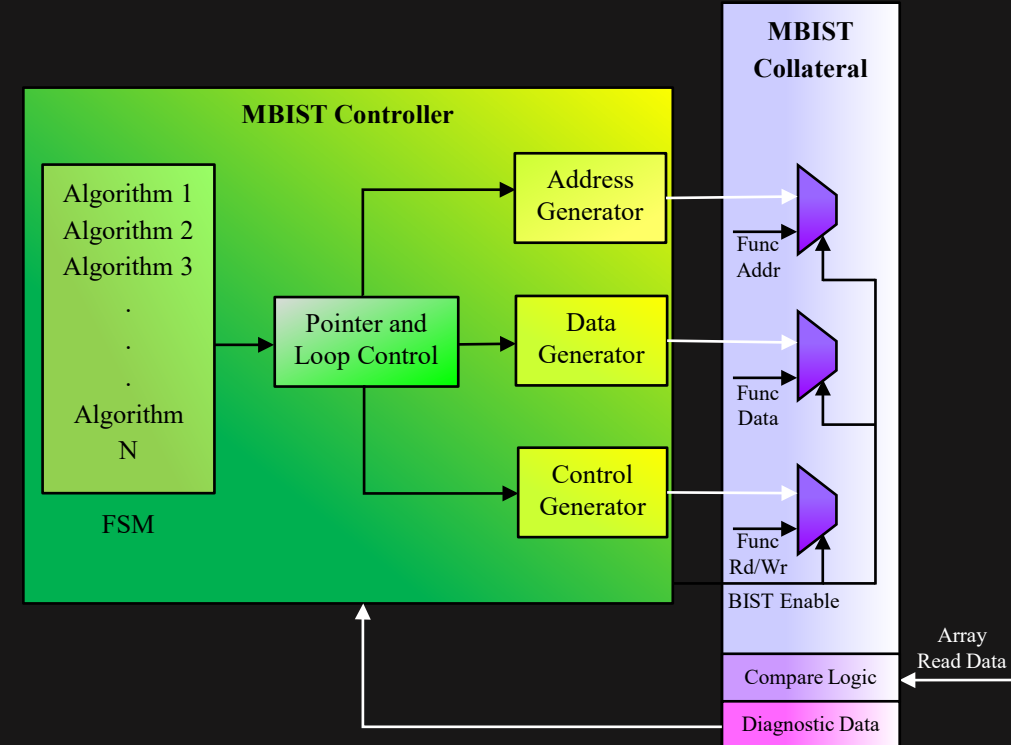


Figure 3: MBIST architecture showing the MBIST Controller with its components and MBIST Collateral [9].

# Objectives

Key goals is to improve MBIST area and test time estimation using machine learning and automation

# To PROPOSE

better feature engineering techniques

Use RTL-level info like memory size, word width, clock domains, and test settings to capture and model design complexity.

# To DESIGN

smarter models – stacked ensemble

Stacked ensemble with XGBoost, LightGBM, Neural Network, and meta-learners to predict MBIST area and test time without synthesis.



# To INCORPORATE

AI-driven semantic port classification

Apply AI to classify ports (clock, address, data) from RTL code using semantic analysis,  
replacing manual tagging.

# Scope of Work

From MBIST integration to synthesis-free prediction using machine learning

## Integrated

MBIST into RTL designs using Tessent MBIST

## Extracted

area using Synopsys Design Compiler and test time using Tessent MBIST

## Created

baseline models for comparison (Linear, Polynomial Regression, Gradient Boosting, KNN, Neural Network)

## Developed

a stacked ML ensemble combining XGBoost, LightGBM, and Neural Network

# Scope of Work

From MBIST integration to synthesis-free prediction using machine learning

## Applied

feature engineering using RTL-level memory and port parameters

## Generated

over 5,000 IP design variants with varied configurations

## Tuned

models' hyperparameter with Optuna for better accuracy

## Evaluated

model performance using  $R^2$  score, *MAPE* and *Accuracy* with  $\pm 10\%$  tolerance

# Literature Review

Summary of past MBIST prediction studies and their key limitations

Table 1: Review of related works on machine learning.

Author, Title, Year	Improvement Techniques	Limitations	Key Results
Darakshan Jamal, Ratheesh Thekke Veetil, MBIST Area & Test Time Optimisation Using Machine Learning, 2023 [10]	Logistic, Decision Tree, Polynomial Regression, clustering	Did not include MBIST algorithm type, limiting test time accuracy	40% area reduction, >85% test time accuracy
Puneet Arora et al., "Machine Learning-Based MBIST Area Estimation," 2023 [7]	Random Forest, Neural Network	Basic models, no layout insight or combinational/sequential breakdown	>90% accuracy, faster config evaluation
Darakshan Jamal et al., "Efficient MBIST Area and Test Time Estimator Using Machine Learning Technique," 2023 [5]	Decision Tree, Gradient Boosting, clustering	No clear link between test time and core parameters	>93% area accuracy, >85% test time accuracy
Balwinder Singh et al., "Area Overhead and Power Analysis of March Algorithms for Memory BIST," 2012 [12]	Verilog-based March algorithms	No IP-level MBIST or integration challenges considered	March Y: 2562 cycles, March C-: 4105 cycles

# Key Contributions

Used linear regression, decision trees [5, 6, 36]

Used memory size, depth, and clock domains [5, 7, 11, 37]

Classified memory blocks manually or skipped signal types [5, 6, 9, 38]

Focused on predicting MBIST area and test time [5, 7]

Applied MBIST at SoC level [5, 7, 10]

Evaluated < 40 SRAMs [5, 7]

Selected memory-related inputs [5, 7, 10]

# Aspect

**Model Complexity**

**Feature Engineering**

**Signal Classification**

**Optimisation Focus**

**Integration Level**

**Memory Coverage**

**Feature Selection**

# Identified Gaps

No ensemble models. Poor at capturing complex patterns

Missed algorithm types and feature interactions

No RTL-level port tagging or bit-width detection

No attempt to optimise or improve results after prediction

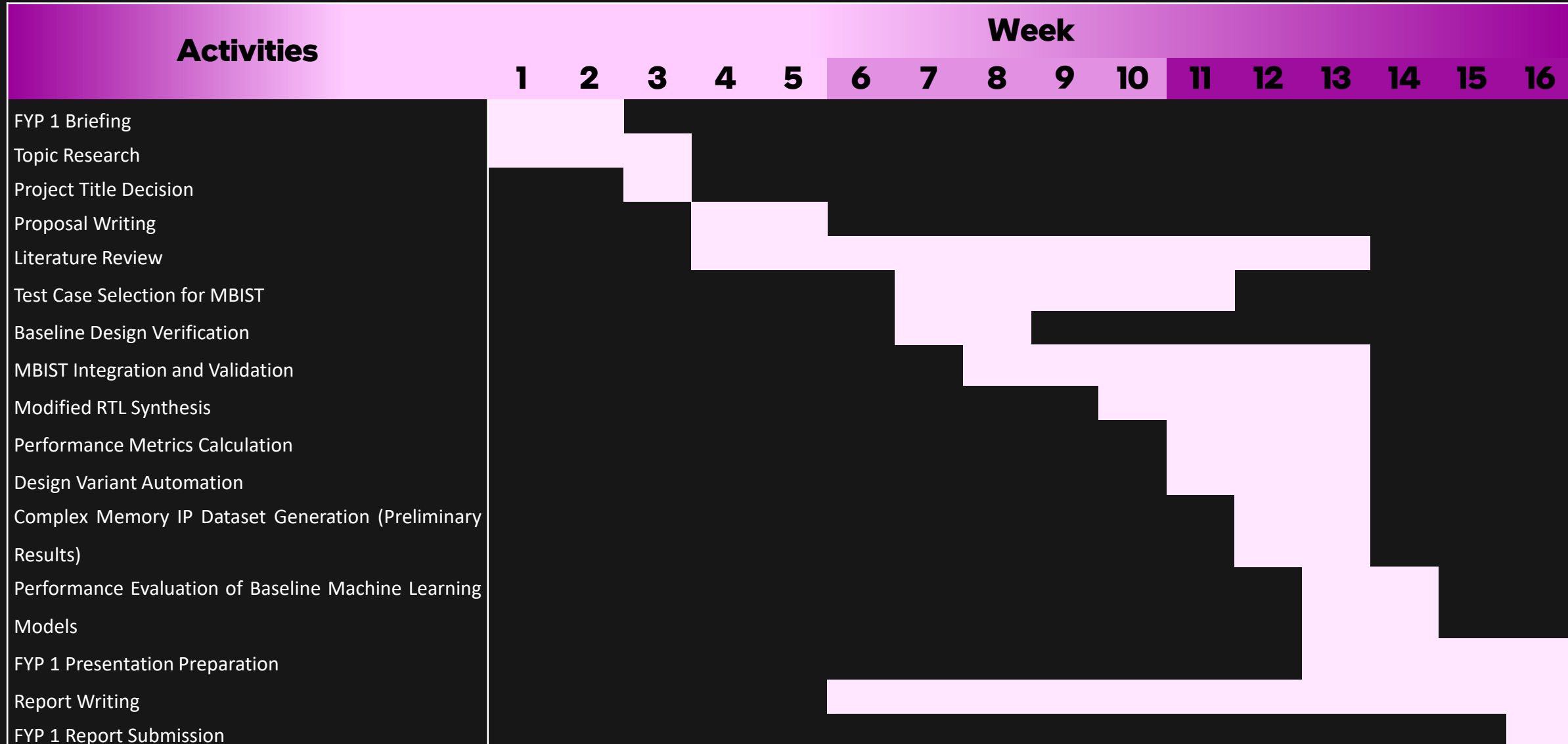
IP-level MBIST insertion rarely explored

Limited scalability. No testing on large, mixed memory sets

Ignored logical ports that affect test cycles

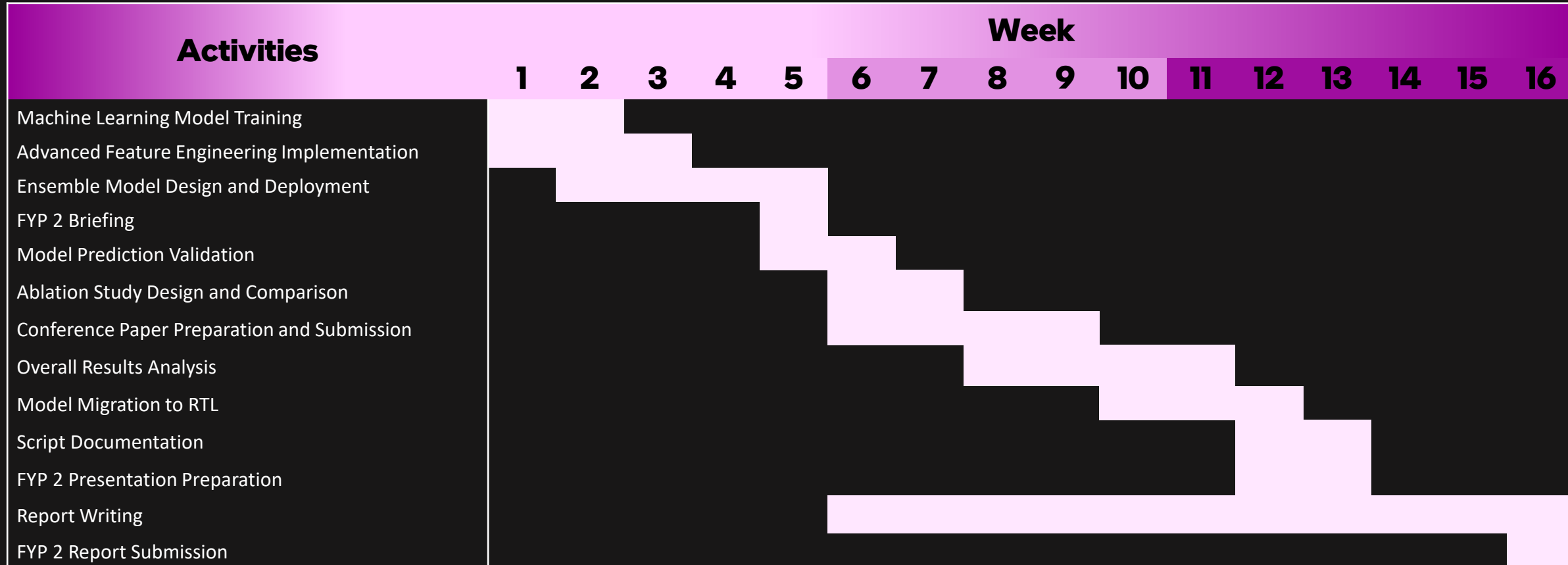
# Gantt Chart (FYP 1)

Table 2: Detailed Gantt chart of FYP 1.



# Gantt Chart (FYP 2)

Table 3: Detailed Gantt chart of FYP 2.





# System Architecture

Architectural flow of the proposed ML-based MBIST estimation system

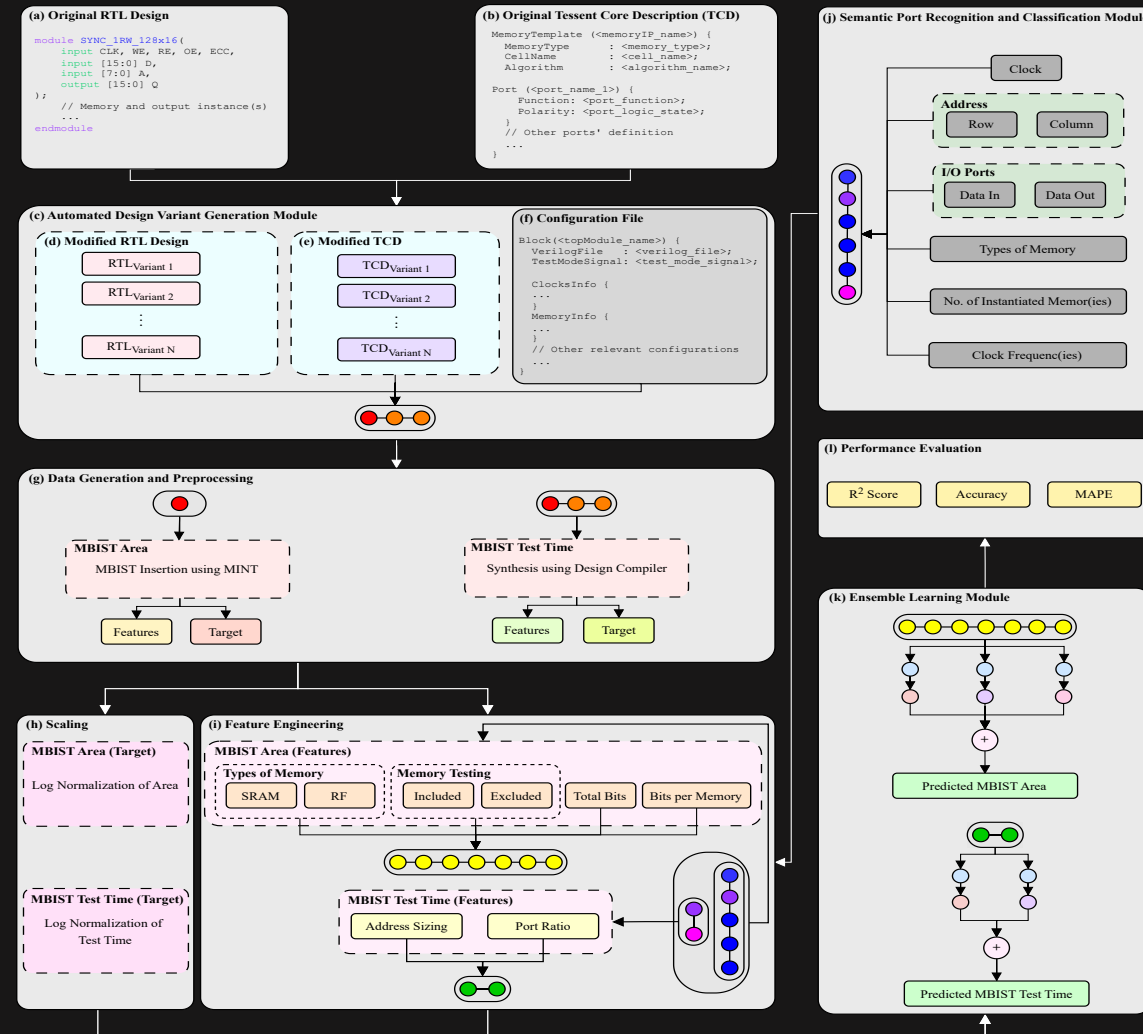


Figure 4: Proposed framework for MBIST prediction overview.

# Research Methodology (Part 1)

From RTL design to feature-rich dataset for MBIST estimation

## Inserted

MBIST at RTL designs using Tessent MBIST [8, 9, 27]

## Generated

over 5,000 variants by changing memory configs, ports, clocks and more

## Extracted

area using Synopsys Design Compiler and test time using Tessent MBIST [9, 27]

## Identified

essential features for both MBIST area and test time to predict target(s) [14, 31]

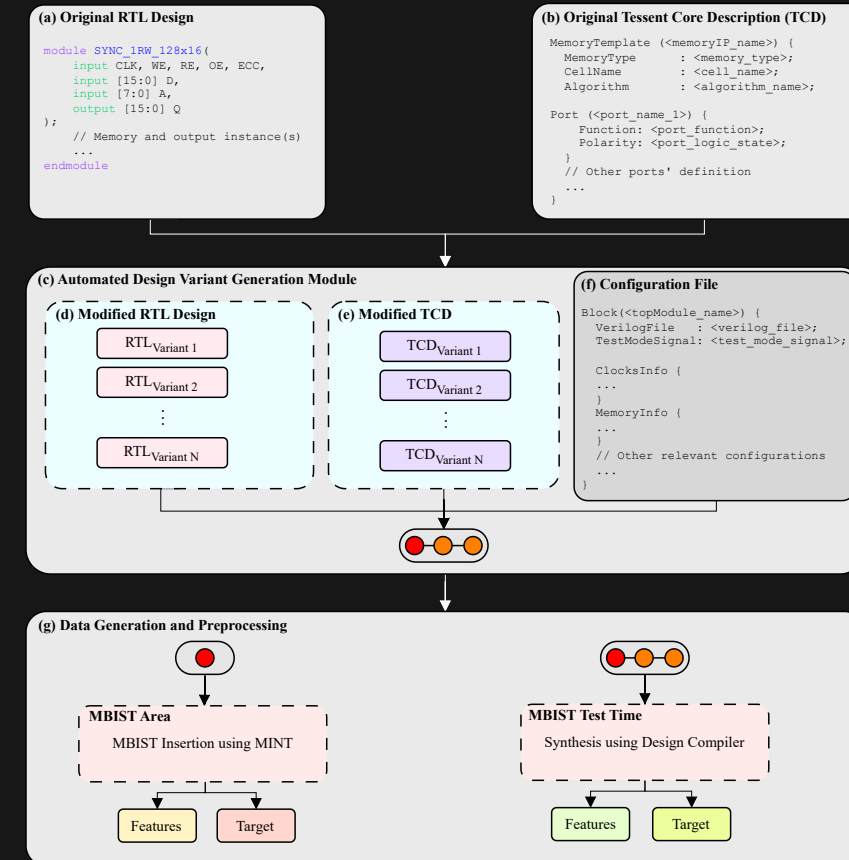


Figure 5: Proposed framework for dataset generation.

# Research Methodology (Part 2)

Ensemble machine learning pipeline for accurate and scalable prediction

## Reengineered

the raw features to new features such as included bit usage, address sizing, port ratios

## Normalised

both MBIST area and test time to improve learning

## Optimised

hyperparameter tuning using Optuna (100 trials) [30, 63]

## Developed

stacked ensemble model for area: XGBoost + LightGBM + Neural Network → Gradient Boosting (meta) [14, 17, 47]

stacked ensemble model for test time: XGBoost + LightGBM → Ridge Regression (meta) [30, 63]

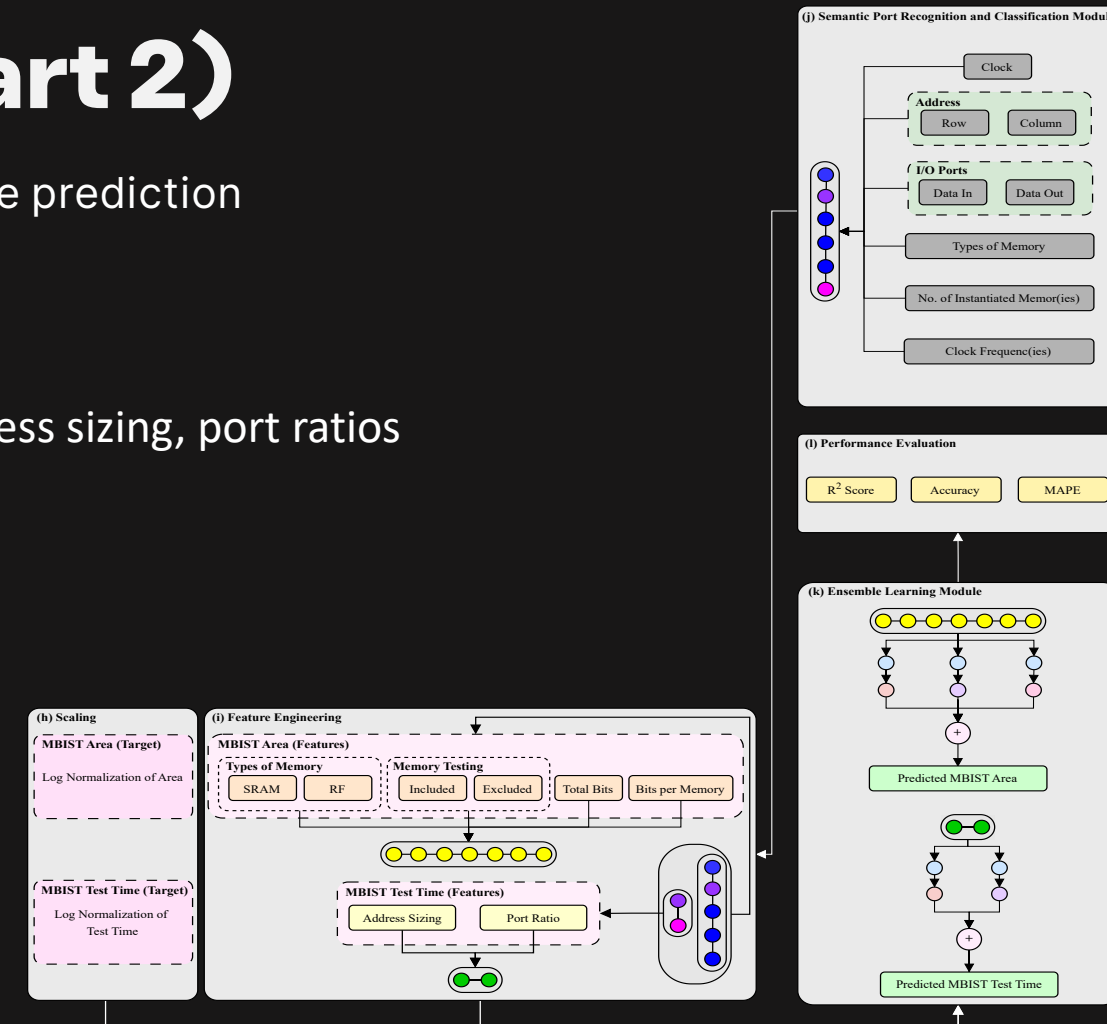


Figure 6: Proposed framework for ensemble pipeline with feature engineering.

# Dataset Generation for MBIST Prediction

Creating > 5,000 memory IP variants through automated RTL and MBIST flows

**4,470**

dataset for area prediction

**624**

dataset for test time prediction

## Tool Flow

Makefile automation → Tessent (MBIST insertion) → Design Compiler (synthesis) → Python (structured CSV with raw features)

## Target / Output

*MBIST Area = Modified Design Area – Original Design Area*

*Test Time = Clock Period × Test Cycles =  $\frac{\text{Test Cycles}}{\text{Clock Rate}}$*

Table 4: Raw features and dataset range for MBIST metrics prediction.

Feature	Description	Range
MBIST area engineered features		
SRAM	Number of embedded SRAM instances	0 – 80
RF	Number of register file (RF) instances	0 – 80
Total Memories	Total number of memories (SRAM + RF + excluded memories)	2 – 103
Clock Domains	Number of clock domains connected to memory blocks	1 – 3
Address Depth	Bit-width of address used to access memory	64 – 512
Data Width	Bit-width of data bus used for read/write access	8 – 32
MBIST test time engineered features		
Row Count	Bit-width of row number in the memory library	2 – 4096
Column Count	Bit-width of column number in the memory library	2 – 16384
Write Port	Total number of memory write ports	1 – 2
Read Port	Total number of memory read ports	1 – 2

# Feature Engineering and Input Transformation

Enriching raw RTL features to boost MBIST prediction accuracy

## Extracted

raw design attributes from RTL

## Applied

polynomial and logarithmic transformations

## Normalised

targets using logarithm with z-score scaling

## Outcome?

Domain-specific transformations led to better convergence, reduced overfitting, and improved generalisation

Table 5: Engineered features for MBIST metrics prediction.

Feature	Description
MBIST area engineered features	
Included	Indicates whether a memory is configured for MBIST insertion
Included Ratio	Ratio of included memories to total memory instances
Included per Clock Domain	Average number of included memories per clock domain
Memory Type	Encoded memory type (0 for SRAM, 1 for Register File)
Total Bits	Total memory capacity calculated as depth multiplied by width
Excluded Ratio	Ratio of excluded memories within the design
Bits per Memory	Average bit size per memory instance
Log Area	Log-transformed value of area to stabilise variance
MBIST test time engineered features	
Address Sizing	Estimated number of addressable memory cells calculated from row and column
Port Ratio	Ratio of write to read ports with a constant added to maintain stability
Log Test Cycles	Log-transformed value of test cycles used as the prediction target

# Proposed Stacked Ensemble Architecture

Leveraging hybrid learning models for accurate and scalable MBIST estimation

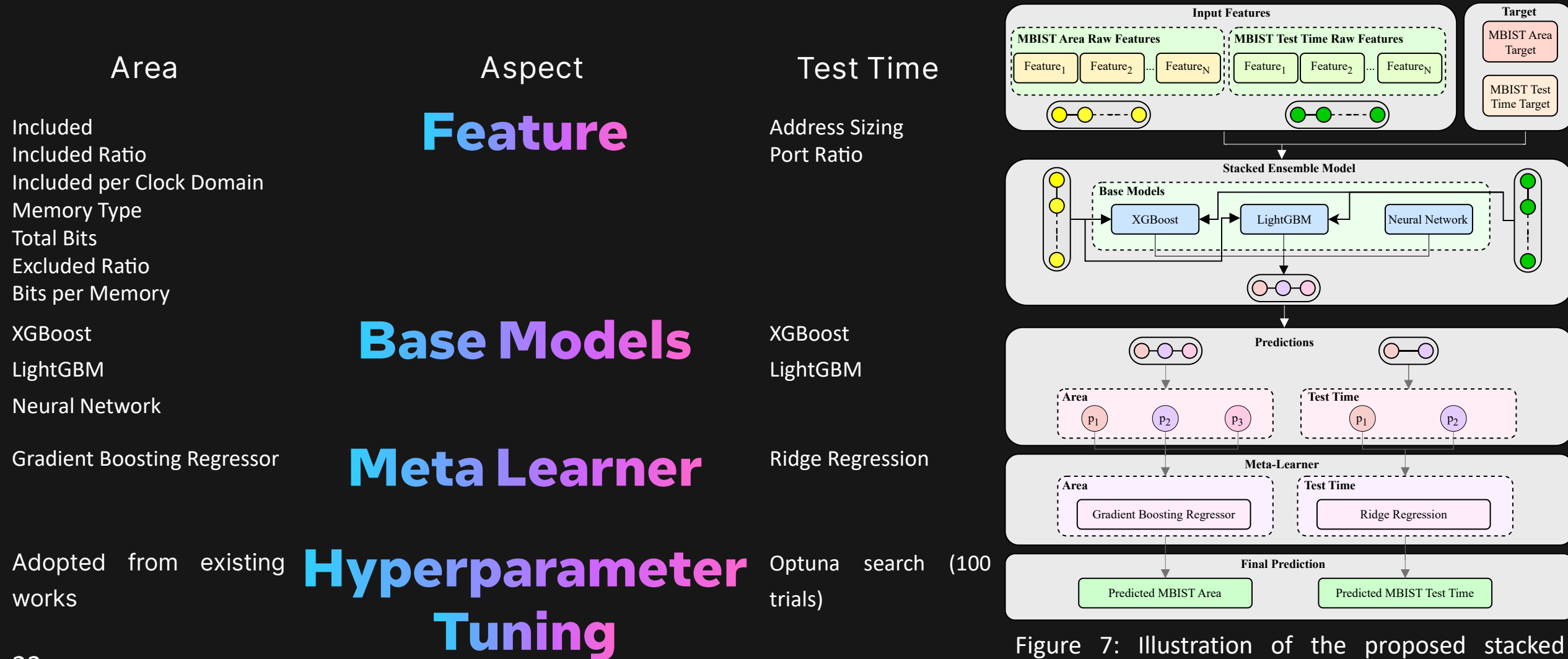


Figure 7: Illustration of the proposed stacked ensemble architecture.

# Proposed Algorithms

Leveraging hybrid learning models for accurate and scalable MBIST estimation

Table 6: Algorithm of the proposed stacked ensemble learning for MBIST area prediction.

Algorithm 1 Proposed stacked ensemble learning for area prediction

Input: Dataset =  $\{X, y\}$  with engineered features,  $y$  log-scaled

- 1: polynomial degree  $p = 2$ ;
- 2: base learners  $M_1(XGBoost), M_2(LightGBM), M_3(NN)$ ;
- 3: meta-learner  $M_{meta}$  (Gradient Boosting Regressor);
- 4: Convergence threshold  $\varepsilon$

Output: Trained meta-learner  $M_{meta}$

- 5:  $\tilde{X} \leftarrow \text{poly\_expand}(X, p)$
- 6:  $\tilde{X} \leftarrow \text{standardise}(\tilde{X})$
- 7: for  $M_i \in \{M_1, M_2, M_3\}$  do
- 8:     Train  $M_i$  on  $(\tilde{X}, y)$
- 9:  $Z \leftarrow [M_1(\tilde{X}), M_2(\tilde{X}), M_3(\tilde{X})]$
- 10:  $\text{err}_{\text{prev}} \leftarrow \infty$
- 11: repeat
- 12:     Train  $M_{meta}$  on  $(Z, y)$
- 13:      $\hat{y} \leftarrow M_{meta}(Z)$
- 14:      $\text{err}_{\text{curr}} \leftarrow \text{MAPE}(y, \hat{y})$
- 15:     if  $|\text{err}_{\text{prev}} - \text{err}_{\text{curr}}| < \varepsilon$  then
- 16:         break
- 17:     else
- 18:         Adjust hyperparameters of  $M_{meta}$
- 19:          $\text{err}_{\text{prev}} \leftarrow \text{err}_{\text{curr}}$
- 20: until convergence return  $M_{meta}$

Table 7: Algorithm of the proposed stacked ensemble learning for MBIST test time prediction.

Algorithm 2 Proposed stacked ensemble learning for test time prediction

Input: Dataset =  $\{X, y\}$  with engineered features,  $y$  log-scaled

- 1: base learners  $M_1(XGBoost), M_2(LightGBM)$ ;
- 2: meta-learner  $M_{meta}$  (Ridge Regression);
- 3: Optuna search with  $T = 100$  trials; convergence threshold  $\varepsilon$

Output: Optimised meta-learner  $M_{meta}$

- 4:  $X \leftarrow \text{standardise}(X, p)$
- 5:  $M_1 \leftarrow \text{optuna\_tune}(XGBoost, X, y, T)$
- 6: Train  $M_2$  on  $(X, y)$
- 7:  $Z \leftarrow [M_1(X), M_2(X)]$
- 8:  $\text{err}_{\text{prev}} \leftarrow \infty$
- 9: repeat
- 10:     Train  $M_{meta}$  on  $(Z, y)$
- 11:      $\hat{y} \leftarrow M_{meta}(Z)$
- 12:      $\text{err}_{\text{curr}} \leftarrow \text{MAPE}(y, \hat{y})$
- 13:     if  $|\text{err}_{\text{prev}} - \text{err}_{\text{curr}}| < \varepsilon$  then
- 14:         break
- 15:     else
- 16:         Adjust hyperparameters of  $M_{meta}$
- 17:          $\text{err}_{\text{prev}} \leftarrow \text{err}_{\text{curr}}$
- 18: until convergence return  $M_{meta}$

# Results and Discussion

Results show significant improvement in MBIST estimation using proposed ML



# Hyperparameter Tuning

Refining ensemble models using Optuna to maximise MBIST prediction accuracy

Table 10: Summary of tuned hyperparameters used in stacked ensemble model for MBIST area prediction.

Hyperparameter	XGBoost	LightGBM	Neural Network
Max Depth	7	7	N/A
Learning Rate	0.0135	0.0130	0.0015
N Estimators	850	850	N/A
Subsample	0.92	0.92	N/A
Colsample Bytree	0.87	0.87	N/A
Reg Alpha	0.15	0.15	N/A
Reg Lambda	0.35	0.35	N/A
Dropout Rate	N/A	N/A	0.3 / 0.2
Batch Size	N/A	N/A	128

Table 11: Summary of tuned hyperparameters used in stacked ensemble model for MBIST test time prediction.

Hyperparameter	XGBoost	LightGBM
Max Depth	4	10
Learning Rate	0.0278	0.015
N Estimators	719	1500
Subsample	0.65	0.80
Colsample Bytree	0.85	0.85
Gamma	1.083e-4	N/A
Reg Alpha	7.397e-4	0.05
Reg Lambda	1.40e-4	0.5

**Optuna**

search (100-trials)

+

**Fine**

-tuned parameters

+

**Meta**

-learner

=

**BETTER**  
**Generalisation**

# MBIST Area Prediction Accuracy

Feature engineering significantly improves area prediction performance

**Proposed Stacked Ensemble** with feature engineering

**Gradient Boosting Regressor [7, 10]** w/o feature engineering

**Neural Network [7]** w/o feature engineering

**AdaBoost Regressor [7]** w/o feature engineering

**Polynomial Regression [5]** w/o feature engineering

**Linear Regression [5]** w/o feature engineering

**LassoCV [7]** w/o feature engineering

Up to

**21.2x**

more accurate than the models  
WITHOUT feature engineering

At least

**8.48%**

better than the existing models  
WITH feature engineering

# MBIST Area Prediction Accuracy

Feature engineering significantly improves area prediction performance

Table 8: Comparison of MBIST area prediction metrics with and without feature engineering.

Feature Engineering	Model	Training Set			Test Set		
		$R^2$ Score	Accuracy (%)	MAPE (%)	$R^2$ Score	Accuracy (%)	MAPE (%)
No	LR [5]	0.4074	6.10	2979.99	0.3756	4.26	2871.76
	PolyReg [5]	0.8254	19.41	1973.07	0.7927	18.07	2066.40
	LassoCV [7]	0.4074	6.12	2982.90	0.3757	4.26	2874.53
	AdaBoostReg [7]	0.9886	46.97	137.83	0.9882	45.79	137.44
	GBR [7, 10]	0.9999	71.32	22.65	0.9998	70.59	21.07
	NN [7]	0.9943	68.06	20.69	0.9947	68.24	16.70
	Proposed Work	0.9971	75.64	73.33	0.9946	69.13	121.00
Yes	LR [5]	0.9854	51.83	36.62	0.9875	50.51	34.65
	PolyReg [5]	0.9289	46.74	17.31	0.9327	45.90	15.78
	LassoCV [7]	0.8855	23.40	2319.90	0.8740	21.21	2190.96
	AdaBoostReg [7]	0.9887	47.39	117.50	0.9884	46.35	108.76
	GBR [7, 10]	0.9994	80.25	20.07	0.9994	79.91	22.18
	NN [7]	0.9990	83.43	10.37	0.9992	82.15	8.95
	Proposed Work	1.0000	91.60	5.54	0.9999	90.68	5.14

**Excellent**

model fit

**High**

prediction confidence

**Low**

relative error

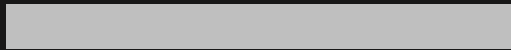
# MBIST Test Time Prediction Accuracy

Feature engineering and model stacking drastically reduce test time error

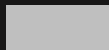
**Proposed Stacked Ensemble** with feature engineering



**Gradient Boosting Regressor [5]** w/o feature engineering



**K-Nearest Neighbours [5, 10]** w/o feature engineering



**Linear Regression [5]** w/o feature engineering



Up to

**20x**

more accurate than the models  
WITHOUT feature engineering

At least

**48.8%**

better than the existing models  
WITH feature engineering

# MBIST Test Time Prediction Accuracy

Feature engineering and model stacking drastically reduce test time error

Table 9: Comparison of MBIST test time prediction metrics with and without feature engineering.

Feature Engineering	Model	Training Set			Test Set		
		$R^2$ Score	Accuracy (%)	MAPE (%)	$R^2$ Score	Accuracy (%)	MAPE (%)
No	LR [5]	0.2761	4.68	2795.41	0.1302	6.78	1909.91
	GBR [5]	0.8327	39.48	16.49	0.7818	33.60	19.40
	KNN [5, 10]	0.4412	4.80	88.15	0.4412	4.80	88.15
	Proposed Work	0.9936	35.87	532.88	0.9360	22.40	788.14
Yes	LR [5]	0.9053	7.89	2062.17	0.8989	7.02	1138.62
	GBR [5]	0.9520	50.50	12.21	0.9095	48.00	14.18
	KNN [5, 10]	0.9072	19.84	23.76	0.8315	19.20	35.26
	Proposed Work	0.9997	100.00	1.06	0.9978	96.80	2.10

## Robust

model fit

## Reliable

prediction confidence

## Reduced

relative error

# Ablation Study – Model Component Impact

Evaluating the role of ensemble learners and feature engineering in prediction performance

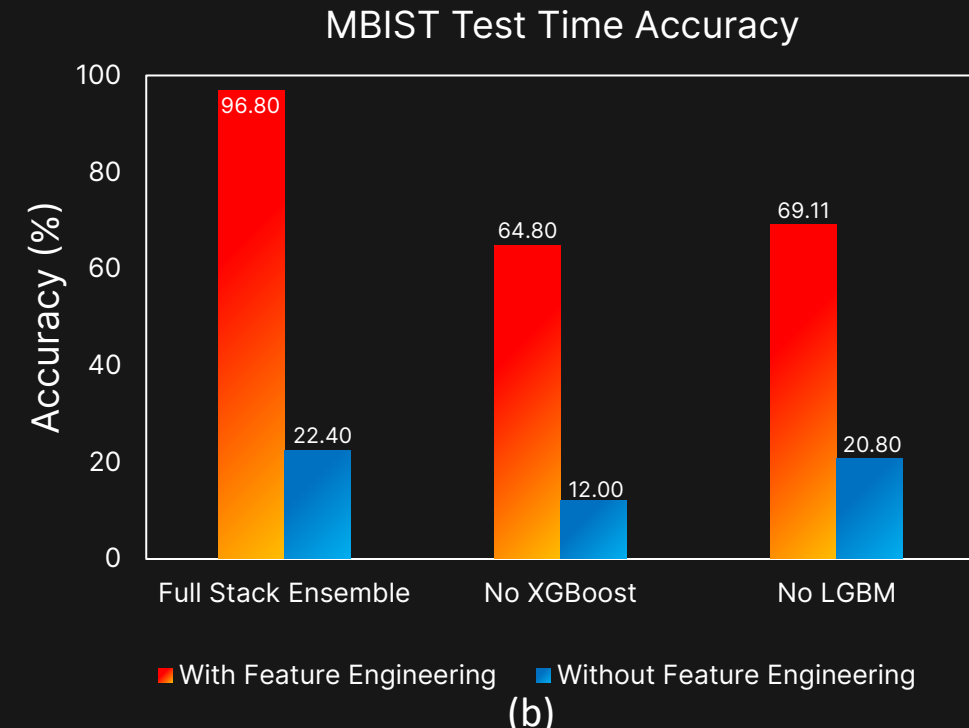
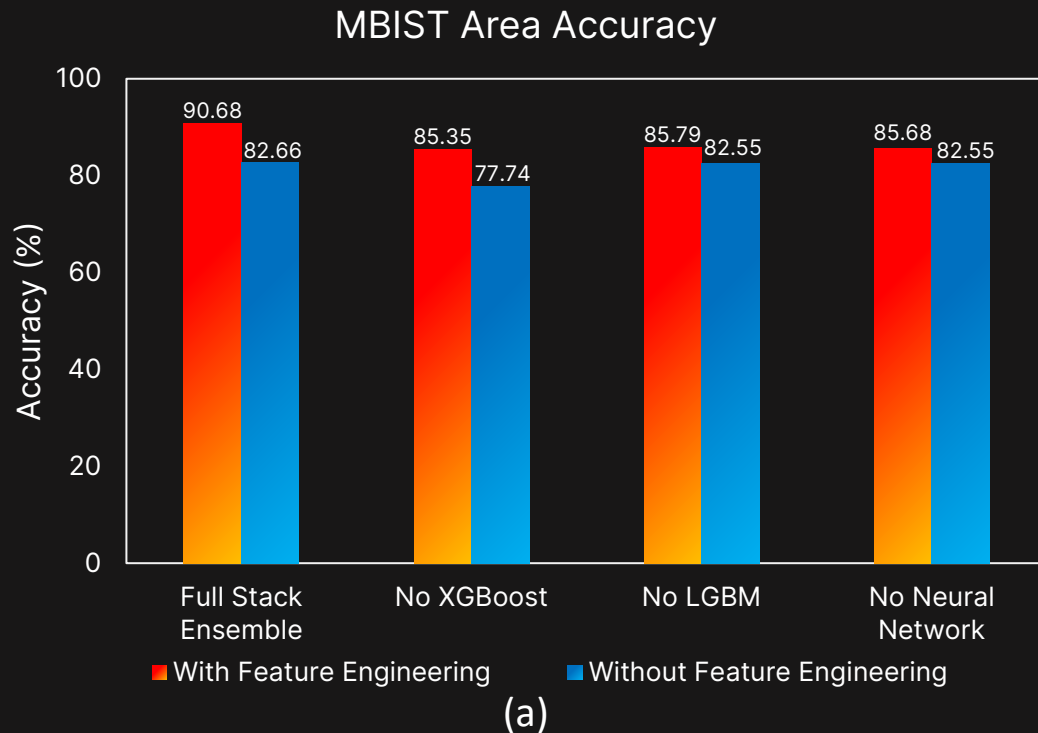


Figure 8: Accuracy comparison of (a) area and (b) test time on ablation study.

## Improved

learning capability via stacked ensemble

Each base learner (XGBoost, LightGBM, NN) contributes unique strengths, i.e., removing one lowers accuracy.

## Critical

domain-specific feature engineering

Lack of feature engineering leads to the largest drop in performance, especially for test time.

# Conclusion

Stacked ensemble and feature engineering deliver  
accurate MBIST estimation from RTL

# Full Stack = Best Generalisation

Combining all learners with engineered features gives highest accuracy across both MBIST metrics.

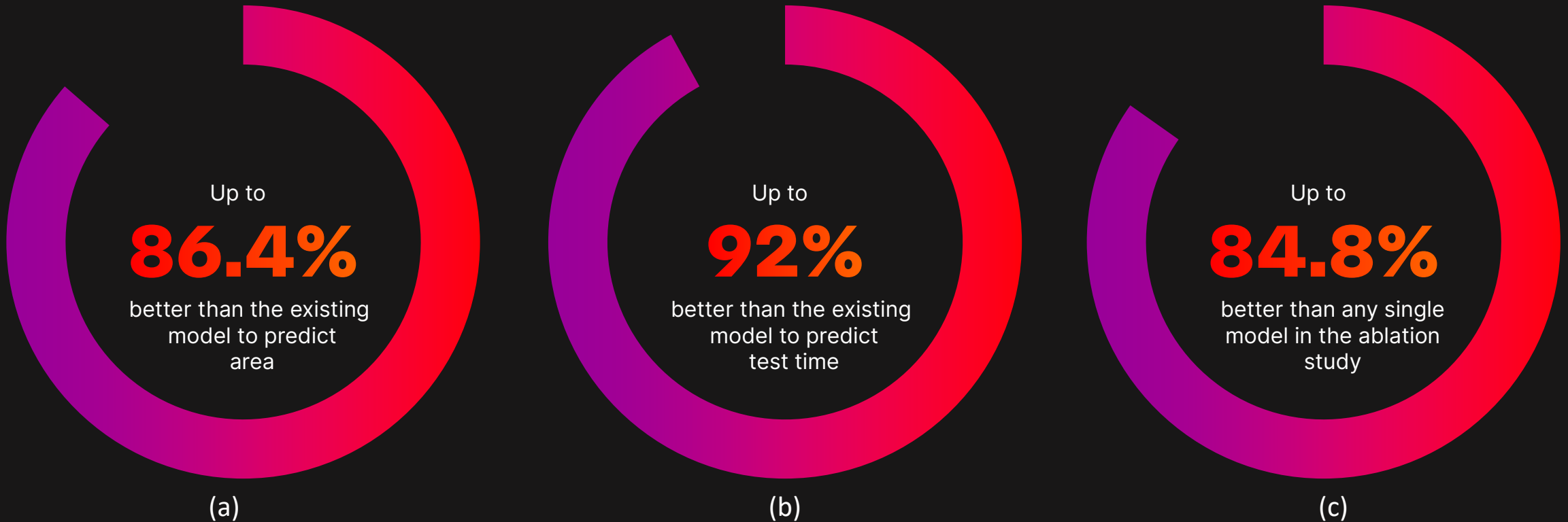


Figure 9: Summary of performance comparison of (a) area, (b) test time and (c) ablation model.



**90.68%**

accuracy achieved to predict MBIST area overhead

**96.80%**

accuracy achieved to predict MBIST test time

**Developed**

a stacked ensemble model (XGBoost + LightGBM + Neural Network)  
with advanced domain-specific feature engineering

**Eliminated**

the need for full synthesis during early-stage design

**Enabled**

fast, accurate MBIST estimation directly  
from RTL

# Thank You

“ If complex IPs can be accurately predicted, ”  
then our future shouldn't just be a guess.

- Chee Jin (2025)

# QnA Session

“ True optimisation isn't solely about reducing area and time — ”  
it's about conserving energy for what truly matters in life.

- Chee Jin (2025)

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