

Post title: **Data Scientist (Reputation & Rankings)**

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Author: Associate Director Strategic Planning & Analytics

Standard Occupation Code:	2433/04
School / Department:	Strategic Planning & Analytics
Faculty / Directorate:	Strategy Office
Job Family:	Management, Specialist and Administrative (MSA)
Grade:	Level 4
ERE Pathway (if applicable):	Not applicable
Post reporting to:	University Rankings Manager
Post line report(s):	N/A
Post base location:	Hybrid: Campus / Home : Southampton Campuses

Job purpose: This is a new post established to support a strategic major project focused on strengthening Southampton's reputation and performance in external rankings. Working with the University Rankings Manager and a Senior Reputation Analyst, the post-holder will help build a richer, data-driven understanding of how reputation is formed, measured and influenced, enabling the University to target activity more effectively and assess its impact.

The Data Scientist's primary focus will be to develop predictive modelling of reputation drivers and outcomes, while also improving the University's analytical tools, methods and use of data. The post-holder will be expected to think creatively about how different sources of data can be brought together to generate new insights, support strategic decision-making and identify opportunities for improvement.

The role will sit within Strategic Planning & Analytics, the University's central data reporting, insight and analysis team. The Analytics & Insights function brings together expertise in data science, advanced analytics, forecasting, student and market insight, and business intelligence, providing a strong technical environment for collaboration, learning and innovation.

Key accountabilities and indicative time allocation:

1.

60%

The post-holder's primary responsibility is to provide specialist data science and analytical support for the University's reputation and rankings work, working closely with the University Rankings Manager and Senior Reputation Analyst to develop evidence, models and tools that inform strategic decision-making:

- To provide high-quality analysis, modelling and reporting on university rankings, reputation indicators, peer performance and related external datasets, supporting the identification and evaluation of opportunities to improve performance in international and domestic league tables.
- Perform detailed analysis, manipulation, and interpretation of data from a wide range of primary and secondary sources, applying statistical techniques where appropriate.

- Create clear, insightful reports and dashboards, highlighting trends, anomalies, and prioritising issues for decision-makers.
- Conduct targeted research and analysis to understand the factors associated with reputation and rankings performance, including external methodologies, indicators and comparator activity.
- Collate, interrogate, and manipulate large datasets into appropriate data packages, ensuring accuracy and consistency.
- Apply appropriate data science and statistical methods, including:
 - Data cleaning and transformation.
 - Exploratory data analysis to identify patterns and correlations.
 - Segmentation or clustering approaches where appropriate to identify patterns, audiences or peer groups.
 - Predictive modelling, trend forecasting, scenario modelling and sensitivity analysis using tools such as Python, R, SQL, Alteryx or similar.
- Use data visualisation tools (e.g., Power BI, Tableau) to present complex information in an accessible format.
- Develop analytical approaches that help identify reputation drivers, model potential outcomes, assess the likely impact of interventions and support prioritisation of activity.
- Ensure compliance with data governance and quality standards.

2.

15%

To support the University's new and existing data resources by:

- Supporting the team's data accessibility strategy by developing dashboards and other data delivery mechanisms to disseminate data and insights to the University community.
- Developing and maintaining data sources for existing dashboards and other data resources.
- Continuously reviewing the portfolio of data resources available to maximise their effectiveness and identify and resolve information gaps.

3.

10%

To work with the University Rankings Manager, Senior Reputation Analyst, the Associate Director of Strategic Planning & Analytics and other members of the wider team to:

- Communicate insights and analysis on reputation and rankings to the wider university community through participation in working groups and committees.
- Integrate a range of primary and secondary datasets and information sources to provide a holistic evidence base for the University.
- Improve the quality of reporting and insight across the University and ensure that high-quality analysis and insight underpin key strategic decision-making.

4.

10%

To support the wider Reputation Management Strategic Major Project and/or the Strategic Planning & Analytics department with administrative tasks as part of the day-to-day running of the office, as agreed with the line manager.

5.

5%

To contribute to the day-to-day activities of the Strategy Office, sharing expertise and learnings, attending Strategy Office events and engaging with the work of others from across both the team and the wider University. This may include working as part of project groups, specialist committees and wider team engagement.

Internal and external relationships:

- The post-holder is expected to develop strong working relationships with a range of individuals from across both Professional Services and the faculties.
- Key internal stakeholders are likely to include colleagues in Global Recruitment and Admissions, Marketing and Communications, Research and Innovation Services, faculties and academic units, Planning, Business Intelligence and data governance teams.
- You will support the preparation of information for committees and boards within the University, in addition to attending meetings and working groups on behalf of Strategic Planning & Analytics.
- It will also be necessary to liaise with stakeholders from outside the University, including market research networks and other higher education bodies such as UCAS, HESPA etc.

Special requirements:

- Attention to detail.
 - Customer focused.
 - Fast learner who is flexible and self-motivated.
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All essential and desirable criteria outlined in this Person Specification will be assessed through a combination of recruitment application and CV, and where applicable, numerical or written assessment.

Knowledge, Experience and Qualifications

Essential

- Substantial and authoritative practical knowledge and experience in the required operational discipline, supported by general theoretical understanding.
- The required level of knowledge and understanding will normally have been gained through some or all of the following:
 - Considerable work experience
 - Vocational training
 - Formal qualification(s) equivalent to Level 5 or 6 of the Regulated Qualifications Framework e.g. foundation degree or degree with honours, or Level 5 or 6 award, certificate, diploma, NVQ.
- A high level of numeracy coupled with experience of producing and analysing complex statistical data from multiple sources. Excellent Excel skills.
- Knowledge of statistical modelling, predictive analytics, data science or machine learning methods, and the ability to apply these appropriately to real-world datasets while recognising assumptions, limitations and risks.
- Experience of integrating, cleaning, validating and analysing complex datasets from multiple sources, including reconciling inconsistent definitions, missing values, naming differences and year-on-year changes, to form a comprehensive and concise evidence base.
- Understanding of different data analysis methodologies, their strengths, limitations and appropriate applications, including correlation analysis, regression, benchmarking, forecasting, scenario analysis and interpretation of composite or weighted indicators.
- Ability to assess whether patterns, trends and relationships in data are meaningful, reliable and relevant to the decision being made, including recognising limitations such as small sample sizes, confounding factors and correlation versus causation.
- Experience translating complex quantitative analysis into clear insights, options and evidence-based recommendations for decision-makers.
- Awareness of data protection and ethical considerations when processing data and

conducting this type of work.

Desirable

- Knowledge of university rankings, league tables, reputation surveys or higher education performance metrics.
 - Experience using analytical software or programming tools, such as Python, R, SQL, Alteryx or equivalent, for data cleaning, transformation, analysis or modelling.
 - Experience working with external datasets such as QS, THE, REF, HESA, NSS, UCAS, Graduate Outcomes or bibliometric sources.
 - Experience using data visualisation or reporting tools to communicate complex information clearly to non-specialist audiences.
 - Experience working with complex, incomplete or inconsistent datasets and applying judgement to assess data quality, limitations and appropriate use.
 - Formal qualification(s) equivalent to Level 7 of the Regulated Qualifications Framework e.g. master's degree, postgraduate certificate, diploma or Level 7 award, certificate, diploma.
 - Experience developing benchmarking, scenario analysis or prioritisation frameworks to identify performance gaps, assess improvement opportunities and support strategic planning.
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Teamwork and Communication

Essential

- Collaborates effectively, understanding the strengths and weaknesses of colleagues.
 - Works proactively with colleagues and other stakeholders, within and beyond the University, to achieve outcomes.
 - Communicates effectively to develop understanding and achieve cooperation.
 - Provides clear specialist advice, guidance and recommendations on complex issues.
 - Ability to work independently and effectively within a matrix working structure.
 - High level of written and verbal communication skills including the ability to present and prepare reports on complex (numerical) information in a concise and user-friendly way.
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Planning, Organisation and Resource Management

Essential

- Plans and progresses a range of work activities within broad professional guidelines and established University policies and procedures.
- Formulates development plans to meet current skill requirements.
- Able to manage a broad range of competing demands and activities including those with both short term and longer term delivery dates.
- Able to plan and manage significant new projects or activities, ensuring plans complement broader departmental/organisational strategy.

Desirable

- Ability to apply project management processes.
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Problem Solving and Initiative

Essential

- Develops detailed understanding of long-standing and/or complex problems and applies professional knowledge and experience to resolve them.

- Demonstrates an awareness of principles and trends in a professional or specialist field and awareness of how this affects activities in the University.
- Able to analyse data to inform your decisions and to use those data to produce concise reports and summaries for senior managers and committees.
- Able to identify and solve analytical problems by applying judgement and initiative, selecting appropriate methods, testing assumptions, interpreting results carefully and developing improved analytical approaches.

Desirable

- Using AI in a safe and managed way to support professional tasks.

Job Hazard Assessment

A full health clearance is required for this role where any hazards marked “^”, using the agreed Occupational Health referral template [available from here](#). Where a full health clearance is required, this will apply to all role holders, including existing members of staff.

Physical Environment

Working outside ^	Not applicable
Exposure to noise levels >80dbA ^	Not applicable
Working with dust or fumes ^	Not applicable
Working with skin irritants ^	Not applicable
Working with chemicals (industrial or cleaning) ^	Not applicable
Working in a confined space ^	Not applicable
Working at height ^	Not applicable
Working with sewage ^	Not applicable
Contact with cytotoxins ^	Not applicable
Exposure Prone Procedure (EPP) work ^	Not applicable
Contact with clinical specimens or pathology work ^	Not applicable
Direct patient care or patient contact	Not applicable
Exposure to temperature extremes	Not applicable
Frequent hand washing	Not applicable
Ionising radiation	Not applicable

Psychological and Social Environment

Working shifts ^	Not applicable
Working nights ^	Not applicable
Lone working	Not applicable
Working with children	Not applicable
Exposure to persons with challenging behaviour	Not applicable
Working with larger groups	Not applicable

Equipment, Tools and Machines

Working with vibrating machinery or tools ^	Not applicable
Driving duties e.g. LGV, PCVs, forklift trucks ^	Not applicable

Food handling	Not applicable
Contact with latex	Not applicable

Physical Abilities

Prolonged physical movements or actions e.g. walking ^	Not applicable
Prolonged Standing or Sitting ^	Not applicable
Moving or handling heavy loads ^	Not applicable
Repetitive pulling or pushing ^	Not applicable
Repetitive climbing (steps, stools, ladders, stairs) ^	Not applicable
Repetitive crouching, kneeling or stooping	Not applicable
Repetitive lifting	Not applicable
Fine motor grips (e.g. pipetting)	Not applicable
Repetitive reaching below shoulder height	Not applicable
Repetitive reaching at shoulder height	Not applicable
Repetitive reaching above shoulder height	Not applicable
