Head of Research

Basic information

Band: B
Job family: Analysis
Terms: Permanent position
Location: Cheltenham

Reports to: Director of Analysis & Research
Team: Research
Business unit: Analysis & Research

Role purpose:

We publish authoritative and trusted quantitative research on all aspects of university admissions, which shapes the national understanding of higher education. But we also use our research capability behind the scenes, to put an evidence base under important decisions on running the admissions service, and to help universities, schools and Government achieve their objectives.

We now have an opportunity for a senior analysis professional, who combines deep technical knowledge, a focus on customer needs, and influencing skills. You will build on the success and reputation of this area and set the strategy for a research capacity that answers the right questions to guide the key decisions for students, providers and policy-makers over the next decade. Working closely with colleagues across the Analysis and Research business unit, and UCAS' Executive Team, this important role sets the agenda on our analytical understanding of admissions and ensures that understanding drives better outcomes across UCAS and beyond.

Key responsibilities:

You will take complex situations and use your analytical expertise to define the right questions, answer them in the right way, and ensure those answers have the right impact. Able to think long-term, you will translate the strategic analytical direction into a coherent and efficient research programme. Your excellent analytical judgement and communication skills let you distill complicated results down to salient points, and then ensure that senior decision makers understand and can act on them.

Working through a code-based SAS platform you will find the most demanding new research yourself, but the majority of your success will be enabling quality, creativity and innovation in the work of all your team.

You will work closely with the Director of Analysis and Research to set the direction of travel for our research, and create and execute the strategy to achieve this. Overall, you will be a key figure in setting the agenda for ensuring the organisation has the right understanding and research capability for achieving its strategic objectives.

Responsibilities to also include:

- Provide technical and strategic leadership for analytical research, and set the agenda for this across the organisation.
- Lead and manage team of data scientists to achieve section outcomes, whilst developing them as innovative technical creators and leaders.
- Maintain and build UCAS' reputation for high quality, high impact and innovative research.
- Publish a wide range of analysis outputs, and ensure they are both understood and influential.
- Structure and efficiently deliver a programme of analysis-based engagement and decision support for the Chief Executive.
- Support the Executive Team in business decision making and risk assessment.
- Play a leading role in cross-function business projects and engage the organisation in your team's work.
- Provide expert guidance on statistical methods and other specialist input across the business unit.
- Anticipate and respond to the organisation's tactical and strategic business support needs.
- Proactively ensure the research team both supports and learns from other teams in the unit.

Accountabilities:

- Our analytical research understanding, the value it generates, and our research capability.
- Lead a team of data scientists to develop to their maximum potential by creating a culture of learning, challenge and continuous development.
- Act as a role model, demonstrating the UCAS values.
- Contribute across the organisation as an active senior manager.
- Manage your budget in an effective way to deliver organisational objectives.

Person specification:

- Strong personal values for committed and collaborative leadership.
- High level abilities to diagnose customer and business needs and construct efficient research activities to directly answer them – track record of creation of value for customers through data.
- Deep knowledge and experience of directly using a wide range of analysis, statistical and data science methods, typically gained from extensive working experience.
- Advanced analytical programming expertise in SAS, commensurate with a senior technical professional across analysis methods, data creation and output.
- High levels of professional judgement in choosing analysis pathways that give rapid, high quality, actionable results.
- Leadership and management capability to achieve section outcomes. Evidenced ability to build strategic capacity in teams.
- Influential and credible. Fluent and engaging in conveying the value in research findings and programmes.

This role profile sets out the scope and main duties of the post at the date when it was drawn up. Such details may vary from time to time without changing the general character of the post or the level of responsibility entailed. Such variations are a common occurrence and cannot of themselves justify a reconsideration of the level of the post. All UCAS employees are expected to be flexible in undertaking the duties and responsibilities attached to their role and may be asked to perform other duties, which reasonably correspond to the general character of their role and their level of responsibility.

Our values in action

Customer – We always look through the customer lens. The logic of the customer is the logic of UCAS.

Commitment – When we commit, we deliver on time, quality, and budget, or we negotiate changed commitments for good reason. We never leave commitments uncovered.

Team – We work collaboratively. When we commit, we commit as an individual and as a team. We strive for and support team success as well as individual success.

Outcomes – We plan and do things to achieve outcomes. We define them, aspire to them, and deliver them.

Agility – We know we need to be agile when we look through the customer lens, when we make commitments, when we work in teams, and strive for the right outcomes.

Extraordinary – We are ambitious for our customers, for UCAS, and for our teams. We want more than ordinary outcomes – we strive to achieve extraordinary outcomes, extraordinary customer focus, and an extraordinary culture of high performance and quality of focus.