	Last Updated: 1/8/2026		
Job Title	Student Data Specialist (Statutory Returns)		
Faculty/ Department	Chief Student Officer Directorate	**Legal Entity**	University of Surrey
Job Family	Professional Services	**Job Level**	4
Reports To	Head of HESA Returns	**Line Manages (role title(s))**	n/a

Job Statement

The post holder will be the lead person will act as the senior specialist lead within Student Data team and lead for student data processes, quality and improvement within the Student Data team, ensuring that the data, processes and governance underpinning HESA and related statutory returns are robust, efficient and compliant.

Working across organisational boundaries, the post holder will provide specialist expertise to understand, improve and govern student data processes spanning business operations, information systems and statutory reporting.

The role will lead investigations into complex student data quality issues, identify root causes, develop sustainable solutions and work collaboratively with colleagues across Student Records, IT, Strategic Planning and Academic Administration to improve institutional data quality, reduce manual intervention and support the implementation of system and process improvements. The post holder will contribute specialist expertise to the development of data models, validation processes and reporting solutions, whilst ensuring that student data is managed consistently, securely and in accordance with regulatory requirements and developing sufficient expertise in statutory reporting processes to provide senior operational support and resilience during periods of peak activity or reduced team capacity.

Reporting to the Head of HESA Data Returns, and working closely with the Student Data Manager, the post holder will contribute to the planning and delivery of statutory returns, provide senior specialist advice on complex student data issues, and support the long-term development of the Student Data function by strengthening institutional capability, improving resilience, reducing dependency on temporary expertise, and supporting the University's evolving regulatory and data governance requirements.

Key Responsibilities This is not designed to be a list of all tasks undertaken but the main responsibilities (5 to 8 maximum)

1. Develop and manage the sustainable improvements, preparation, quality assurance and timely submission of key statutory and regulatory data returns, including HESA returns, Discover Uni and other external reporting requirements.

2. Support the planning, preparation and validation of the Destination of Leavers of Higher Education HESA return, Aggregate Offshore Return and managing and submitting Discover Uni.

3. Support planning and validation of the delivery of the Student HESA return, Institutional Data HESA return and Higher Education Students Early Statistics return.

4. Cross-functional collaboration – work with colleagues across the University to resolve data issues spanning multiple processes. Communicate complex issues clearly, coordinate agreed actions and promote shared ownership of student data quality.
5. Data governance and assurance – support robust governance arrangements for student data, including clear definitions, ownership, controls, documentation and escalation routes.

6. Use University reporting tools to build reporting solutions, manipulate large and complex datasets, and model student data for reporting and quality assurance purposes.

7. Process analysis and business improvement – review student data processes across operational teams, systems and workflows to identify inefficiencies, risks and control weaknesses. Work with stakeholders to design and implement improved processes, business rules and system changes that are efficient, auditable, and aligned with statutory requirements.
8. Support activities outside of their department: registration, invigilation, graduation, open days

N.B. The above list is not exhaustive.

Role Scope and Impact This is a summary of the post holder's role in delivering outcomes, making decisions, and the complexity of problem-solving involved in the role.

1. Accountability: Describe level of autonomy and decision making

The post holder will operate with considerable professional autonomy within the direction established by the Head of HESA Data Returns. They will be expected to independently investigate complex student data issues, determine appropriate analytical approaches, develop recommendations and coordinate improvement activity across multiple business areas.
The role exercises significant professional judgement in interpreting regulatory requirements, assessing data quality risks, identifying opportunities for improvement and advising colleagues on appropriate courses of action. The post holder will influence operational and technical decisions relating to student data quality, governance and statutory reporting, whilst referring significant strategic, policy or resource decisions to the Head of HESA Data Returns.

2. Problem solving: *Describe complexity and nature of problems handled.*

The role involves investigating and resolving highly complex student data issues. The post holder must analyse problems, identify data inconsistencies, interpret HESA validation requirements, and determine appropriate solutions with limited guidance. Problems may be administrative, technical or student-record focused, with competing deadlines and changing priorities. More complex or high-risk issues are escalated to the Head of HESA Returns where required

Supplementary Information

Person Specification This section describes the knowledge, experience & competence required by the post holder that is necessary for standard acceptable performance in carrying out this role.

Qualifications and Professional Memberships		
Significant vocational experience demonstrating development through involvement in a series of progressively more demanding relevant work/ roles, and the acquisition of appropriate professional or specialist knowledge.		E
Technical Competencies (Experience and Knowledge) This section contains the level of competency required to carry out the role (please refer to the Competency Framework for clarification where needed and the Job Matching Guidance). Level 1: basic level of understanding/experience and can apply it with guidance. Level 2: good level of understanding/experience and can apply it with little or no guidance. Level 3: expert level of understanding/experience and can apply, develop it and guide others.	**Essential/ Desirable**	**Level 1-3**
Experience in student information systems (preferably Tribal SITS)	E	2
Experience in statutory reporting (HESA)	E	3
Experience in student data management within a University or Education setting	E	3
Experience in data quality governance	E	3
Experience developing or using validation checks, exception reports and data quality monitoring processes	E	3
Experience in identifying and improving business processes across multiple teams	E	2
Special Requirements This may include a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, regular overseas travel, driving licence, shift work.		**Essential/ Desirable**
Some weekend/evening work may be required as directed by the Head of HESA Returns		D
Core Competencies This section contains the level of competency required to carry out this role. (Please refer to the competency framework for clarification where needed). n/a (not applicable) should be placed, where the competency is not a requirement of the grade.		**Level 1-3**
Communication		3
Adaptability and Flexibility		3

Customer, Client service and support	2
Planning and Organising	3
Continuous Improvement	3
Problem Solving and Decision Making Skills	3
Managing and Developing Performance	1
Creative and Analytical Thinking	3
Influencing, Persuasion and Negotiation Skills	3
Strategic Thinking and Leadership	1

This Job Purpose outlines the core activities of the role. As the Department/Faculty and the post holder evolve, the duties and focus of the role may change. The University expects the post holder to adopt a flexible approach to work, including undertaking relevant training when necessary. If significant changes to the Job Purpose are required, the post holder will be consulted, and the changes will be reflected in a revised Job Purpose.

All staff are expected to:

- Positively support equality of opportunity and equity of treatment to colleagues and students in accordance with the University of Surrey Equal Opportunities Policy.
- Work to achieve the aims of our Environmental Policy and promote awareness to colleagues and students.
- Follow University/departmental policies and working practices in ensuring that no breaches of information security result from their actions.
- Contribute towards broader university initiatives that have a positive impact on student experience, recruitment and campus operations. This may include participation in cross-functional activities such as open days, confirmation and clearing, welcome week, graduation.
- Ensure they are aware of and abide by all relevant University Regulations and Policies relevant to the role.
- Undertake such other duties within the scope of the post as may be requested by your Manager.
- Work supportively with colleagues, operating in a collegiate manner at all times.

Help maintain a safe working environment by:

- All staff have a statutory responsibility to take reasonable care of themselves and others and to prevent harm by their acts or omissions. All staff are, therefore, required to adhere to the University's Our Safety Policy Statement and associated Procedures.

Organisational/Departmental Information & Key Relationships

Background Information

This role operates within the Student & Academic Administration Department. The department leads on registration, student record management, student scheduling, fee records, academic administration, examinations, graduation and awards.

Department Structure Chart

