MSc Data Science and Business Analytics
Questions & Answers

Q: *I don't have any background in data science, statistics or computing. Is this course suitable for me?*

A: Yes. This is a conversion course, so all our modules are accessible to students from any discipline. There are no computing nor statistics prerequisites.
We currently have several students on the course who come from finance, business, psychology, law, art and even dance. They didn't have any previous knowledge of computing or statistics and they are all doing very well.

Q: *How can I apply to the course?*

A: In order to apply, please go to the webpage
 https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate/msc-data-science-and-business-analytics and click on "Apply now", then follow the instructions.

Q: *I have questions about the application process and English language qualification. Can you help me with this?*

A: For any question on the application process or English qualifications, please contact the Admissions Team at admissions@plymouth.ac.uk.

Q: *Why should I choose the MSc Data Science and Business Analytics in Plymouth and not in any other university?*

A: There are many reasons why you should attend this course at Plymouth and not in another university.
As opposed to many other masters courses in data science, the MSc Data Science and Business Analytics is a conversion course, it doesn't have any prerequisite and all our modules are accessible to students from any discipline.
We offer a lot of support to our students. Students who need clarifications regarding teaching sessions can book one-one-one sessions with their lecturers. Most of the lecturers have an open door policy, meaning that they can pop in lecturers' offices to ask questions whenever they need it.
We have several placements opportunities that can be arranged through our Employability Hub: please see here: https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/your-studies/academic-services/careers-and-employability
The University of Plymouth is one of the top ranking young universities in the world: https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/news/university-ranked-among-worlds-top-25-and-1st-for-marine-in-times-higher-education-impact-rankings
Our research is leading at international level.

The city is also very nice, but not too chaotic and it is affordable.
Plymouth is situated in the South West of the UK, in a beautiful location that is very close to the sea and to Dartmoor national park: https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/about-us/visit

Q: *Can the masters course be taken on a part-time basis?*

A: Yes. According to the University regulations, you can complete the programme on a part-time basis in a maximum of 5 years.
The majority of our current part-time students are completing the programme in 2 years. However, some of them are doing it in 3 years.
If you are planning to do the course part-time over 2 years you could do:

Year One:
Semester One: 2 Modules. 8 Hours per week.
Semester Two: 2 Modules. 10 Hours per week.

Year Two:
Semester One: 1 Module. 4 hours per week.
Semester Two: 1 Module. 2 Hours per week.
Project module. Generally 2 hours fortnightly in Semester One and meetings agreed with supervisor in Semester Two and over the summer.

If you are taking the course on a part-time basis, you need to contact the Faculty to let them know your plans (before mid- September) and then you need to contact me again,
since I can suggest you which modules to take each year.

If you go for the full time option, instead, you'll have 3 modules in Semesters 1 and 2 (approximately 12 contact hours per week) and you'll have meetings agreed with your supervisor over the summer.

Q: *What is the average class size of the course?*

A: For most classes the average size is approximately 40-50. However, the class size may vary for the project module and the optional business modules.

Q: *On average, how much time do the lecturers have for one-to-one sessions?*

A: Students who need clarifications regarding teaching sessions can book one-to-one sessions with their lecturers. Most of the lecturers have an open door policy, meaning that they can pop in lecturers' offices to ask questions whenever they need it.

Q: *Are there any placements available for students on the course?*

A: Currently the MSc Data Science and Business Analytics doesn't have a placement embedded in the course. Nevertheless, we are discussing its inclusion in the future. However, we have plenty of placements opportunities that can be arranged through our Employability Hub. Please see here: https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/your-studies/academic-services/careers-and-employability

Q: *Before the course starts, what would you advise I focus on learning?*

A: Since the MSc Data Science and Business Analytics is a conversion course, it doesn't have any prerequisite and all our modules are accessible to students from any discipline. However, if you have time and wish to carry out preparatory reading, the topic depends on your background. In general, I would suggest you get started with the R and Python software.

Q: *Is there a minimum laptop specification required for students taking the masters programme?*

A: there are no specific requirements for students' laptops.
The university machines are well-equipped with the software needed in class.
Students may wish to install software on their personal laptops. Each piece of software used in the course is free and can be used on any standard laptop.

Q: *In your opinion would it be realistic to work whilst taking this course?*

A: Yes. We have several students who are studying part-time and working at the same time (working part-time or taking permits from their employer to attend classes).

Q: *Would this MSc open similar doors to a Computer Science MSc?*

A: Whilst an MSc Computer Science focuses exclusively on this discipline, our DS&BA programme is multidisciplinary and includes modules in 3 main areas: computing, analytics and business. The modules in the areas of analytics and business will allow you to gain a broader range of skills compared to a Computer Science course.

Q: *What are typical jobs people go into upon completion of this course?*

A: Just to give you an idea of jobs, our masters graduates include, for example:

- Data Scientist at Babcock, Plymouth.
- Data Analyst at Brittany Ferries, Plymouth.
- Data Scientist at Harrier Print Ltd in Newton Abbot
- Data Analyst at Mystery Shoppers Ltd at Holsworthy
- Software Developer at SUVO Ltd, Plymouth
- Data Scientist at BASF Digital Farming Solutions – Xarvio in Cologne, Germany
- Data Analyst at NAVEX Global in Chippenham
- Data Analyst at St John Ambulance in London
- PhD Student in Computer Science, informatics and Data Science at the University of Huddersfield.
- PhD Student in Computer Science at the University of Plymouth.
- PhD Student in Statistics at the University of Plymouth
- Software Engineering Specialist at BT in Leeds.
- Associate Engineer, Data Analytics at Singtel in Singapore
- System Analyst at Stark at Horley
- Data Engineer at Sparta Global at Southport

Q: *What is the average commitment in terms of hours per week?*

A: For the MSc DS&BA (if you take it full-time) there are approximately 12 contact hours per week (4 x 3 modules each semester). Occasionally (but not every week), there might be 2 extra hours per week for the project module. Since typically sessions are delivered in 2 hours blocks, you are going to have 2 sessions per module per week.

Q: *What are the Business option modules that I can choose from?*

A: You can choose one 30-credit Business module from a wide range of options in marketing, finance o international business.
Please, have a look at the masters webpage
(https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate/msc-data-science-and-business-analytics), and under "course details" you'll find the list of optional modules.

Q: *I am taking the course on a part-time basis over two years. Which modules do you suggest me to take each year and each semester?*

A: The only thing to be careful about is that MATH517 needs to be taken before MATH518. Also, I suggest taking MATH517 and MATH518 in the same year, because they are closely related modules.
In each year and each semester I suggest taking the following modules:

Year 1 Semester 1:

- MATH517
- COMP5000

Year 1 Semester 2:
- MATH518
- Optional Business module

Year 2 Semester 1:
- MATH525
- PROJ518 (first half of the module)

Year 2 Semester 2:
- MATH514
- PROJ518 (second half of the module)

Q: *Is the MSc Data Science and Business Analytics program accredited by any professional body, such as the BCS?*

A: The MSc Data Science and Business Analytics is not currently accredited by BCS, since this is not exclusively an IT course, but it is multidisciplinary, including modules in computer science, analytics and business.

Q: *Do you have any scholarships available for the course?*

A: Information about scholarships are available on the webpages: https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/study/fees/scholarships-bursaries-and-funding/funding/postgraduates and https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/study/fees/scholarships-bursaries-and-funding/international-students/postgraduate-scholarships-for-international-students

Q: *What are the entry requirements for this course?*

A: In order to see if you are eligible, the entry requirements are listed in the course webpage (https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate/msc-data-science-and-business-analytics), under "Entry requirements".

Q: *Is machine learning covered in any module of the course?*

A: Yes, it is covered in the MATH518 module in Semester 2.

Q: *With regards to assessments, how do they work? Is it all coursework based or are there exams?*

A: For this programme there are no exams. All assessments are coursework, that could be reports or presentations. There could also be in-class-tests for some of the business modules.

Q: *What are the entry requirements for this course?*

A: The entry requirement is an undergraduate degree in any discipline with at least a 2:2.

Q: *What types of areas the final dissertation project should focus on?*

A: The final project is very flexible: it can be focused in one of the 3 areas covered by the modules (computing, analytics, business), or it could be multidisciplinary, or it could also be a project in a different area (e.g. medicine, biology, psychology, geography, geology, law, etc...) where data analysis is required. We also have projects in collaboration with industry (e.g. BT, Software Solved, etc.)

Q: *What would graduates say was the most valuable thing about this programme?*

A: Our graduates usually say that the most valuable thing about this programme is employability. The skills acquired during this masters, combined with your undergraduate degree, are going to boost your employability and give you access to a broad variety of job opportunities in data science.

Q: *I have a background in Business. How could you use the data science course to help find a career in marketing?*

A: Marketing is one of the main areas where data science is applied. With a masters in data science you'd be advantaged compared to other marketing graduates because you'd have computing and analytics skills that will help you to solve marketing problems in a more efficient and effective way.

Q: *As it is a conversion course, do graduates have the same skill level as other courses that are built upon previous statistics and programming knowledge? Will we be at a disadvantage?*

A: Of course, it would be impossible to acquire the same statistics and programming knowledge that other students with a 3-years degree have. However, this is not the point of this masters course. The aim of this MSc is to build on your existing background and complement it with new skills in data science. You will not be disadvantaged, but you will have a different and broader skill set than students with specific degrees.

Q: *I have a background in environmental science. Is there a pathway for me to still apply the knowledge I gain to environmental data while I'm studying?*

A: Data science can be applied to any sector, including environmental science. You could focus on this topic for your final dissertation.

Q: *Do you feel that this course could be beneficial for someone who is looking to work in the video game industry?*

A: Yes. Developing data science skills, you would be able to analyse real-time data about your video game products and you would have useful business knowledge to help you promote and manage your company.

Q: *Are the masters modules co-taught with undergraduate students?*

A: None of the modules on the MSc Data Science and Business Analytics are co-taught with undergraduate students. Our modules are only for masters students.

Q: *I have a background in computer science. With that in mind do you think this course would be suitable for someone of my background?*

A: The computer science module in this programme (COMP5000) might cover topics which are similar to what you have already seen in your undergraduate studies.
However, all the other modules will be completely new for you, including the project module.
This masters programme is going to complement your computer science knowledge with analytics and business skills, boosting your employability opportunities into data science.
We currently have students with a computer science background in class, we have also had them in previous years and we had very good feedback from them.

Q: *Can that this master course lead to a PhD at Plymouth or elsewhere?*

A: Yes, the MSc Data Science and Business Analytics provides a good preparation for a PhD. Some of our graduates are indeed currently doing a PhD.

Q: *I have just been informed that one of the option modules I was very interested in taking is no longer available this academic year.*
Can you let me know what the replacement option module is for this please? Or send me the list of all option modules for this academic year please?

A: The Business option modules are subject to changes. The list of all optional modules is available on the course website, under "course details":
 https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate/msc-data-science-and-business-analytics

Q: *For the optional module I would like to look beyond the list of Business options assigned to the Data Science course and choose a module in a different area. Is this possible?*

A: Unfortunately, it is not possible to select a module outside of the available modules for the MSc Data Science and Business Analytics.
However, you can choose a project dissertation in the area you are interested in.