![AfDSP logo]

Media Release from the Alliance for Data Science Professionals

Date: Embargoed until Monday July 11th 00:01

New Data Scientists' awards welcomed by the National Statistician

The first cohort of data scientists to complete the new, defined standard of professionalism from the <u>Alliance for Data Science Professionals</u> are to receive an award at a special ceremony at the Royal Society on July 12th.

The National Statistician Sir Ian Diamond said: "In recent years, there has been exponential growth in the use of data science in the public sector.

"Innovations in data science can reap great rewards and enable better use of data in decision making and analysis that can benefit everyone—as the Office for National Statistics' Data Science Campus has recently shown on topics as diverse as the cost of living and tracking the busyness of urban centres in real-time using machine learning!

"To this end, data scientists have never been more needed or more helpful in delivering for the public good. I am delighted to see the launch of the Alliance for Data Science Professionals.

"This will help develop and provide the data science skills we need to deliver transformational benefits in the public sector. It will bring together data scientists from across many disciplines and professions where it is currently being incubated.

"I ultimately hope that this will help us better harness data science for good in the public sector.

The AfDSP was set up in 2020 to address the multidisciplinary nature of data science. These new industry-wide standards cover a wide range of issues, including good data management, effective problem solving with data, and managing risks such as data breaches, misuse, or bias in datasets.

The Alliance comprises six organisations: the Royal Statistical Society, BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT, the Operational Research Society, the Institute of Mathematics and its Applications, the Alan Turing Institute, and the National Physical Laboratory (NPL).

The AfDSP chairperson, and the RSS Vice-president for Professional Affairs, Professor Rachel Hilliam, CStat, CMath, said the standards would help build public trust in data scientists.

She added: "It's fantastic that this first cohort of candidates has successfully completed our new standards - a validation of their expertise, ethics, and professionalism.

"But this is just the beginning; we would like to see this level of quantifiable professionalism become the accepted norm and essential for ongoing career development in the sector, ensuring that our data is in safe hands."

One of the candidates to achieve the new standards is Dr Sophie Carr, Founder and Owner of Bays Consulting, an analytics company. She said: "It is a huge privilege to be part of the first cohort to be recognised by an Alliance of learned societies for the work I'm involved in. Data science impacts across society, and it's wonderful we can now show we're working ethically, safely and professionally."

All the Alliance's member societies developed the standards collaboratively, which followed an earlier discussion between the RSS and BCS.

Stian Westlake, Chief Executive of the RSS, added: "The first cohort of data scientists to receive this award are true trailblazers. The standard they have met is a powerful signal of their technical skill, quantitative expertise, and professional values.

"The RSS is confident that these standards will thrive and grow and will be a valuable resource to data scientists everywhere."

Mayank Prakash, President of the BCS, said: "Data science is the foundation of the upcoming era of AI and Machine learning. This will inspire confidence as we use technology to solve our biggest challenges, such as sustainability and climate security, health and longevity, food and water, and peace and literacy.

"Data scientists work across many different disciplines, and it's fantastic that the Alliance brings together professional standards to ensure ethical and well-governed data."

This was echoed by Gavin Blackett FORS, Executive Director of the OR Society, who said: "This is a really exciting initiative that reaches across different professions. The fact that we're offering a professional validation that spans different business functions within both large and small organisations is a hugely compelling proposition."

Professor Paul Glendinning FRSE FIMA, the IMA President, said that mathematics underpins much of data science. "Therefore," he said, "a framework of industry-wide standards for data science professions is of great importance to the IMA, and that's why we are founding members of the Alliance.

"We look forward to welcoming the first Advanced Data Science Professionals to our community and continuing to work with Alliance members."

The former Research Director of The Alan Turing Institute, Professor Andrew Blake, will present the awards.

Dr Matt Forshaw, Senior Advisor for Skills at The Alan Turing Institute and Reader in Data Science at Newcastle University, said: "The Alliance is already playing a significant role in establishing and upholding the professional values necessary to ensure ethical, fair, and safe professional practices around data and AI.

"Together, the Alliance will maintain the high standards required to work in a field crucial to understanding important issues like tracking the spread of diseases and the impact of climate change.

Dr Peter Thompson, FREng, FInstP, FRSC, CEO of NPL, said he was "delighted at the achievements and expertise of the inaugural cohort, including many data scientists at NPL". He added: "The role of data and data scientists has never been more prevalent as our world continues to transform digitally.

"Generating trusted data and providing the confidence needed to make decisions is vital for industry and government, as well as the public, to be assured of how data is used. Implementing new industry-wide standards underpins our ability to deliver this confidence."

The founding of AfDSP was backed by the Royal Society and the Royal Academy of Engineering.

Adrian Smith, President of the Royal Society, said: "The work of the Alliance for Data Science Professionals is very welcome. Industry-wide standards and certification can play an important role in ensuring that ethics and good governance are properly embedded across the data science profession.

"They have the potential to both raise the quality of data-driven insights and provide confidence to the public over how their data is being used."

Professor Sir Jim McDonald FREng, FRSE, President of the Royal Academy of Engineering, said: "Our Academy has highlighted the important role of data in creating social and economic value, and indeed that value depends on skilled data scientists who can derive insight from data in a robust and trustworthy way.

"We welcome the role of the Alliance for Data Science Professionals in setting necessary standards, promoting good data governance, and celebrating best practice for the data science profession."

Notes for Editors:

Governed by a memorandum of understanding, the Alliance is committed to:
- Defining the standards of professional competence and behaviour expected of people who work with data which impacts lives and livelihoods. These include data scientists, data engineers, data analysts and data stewards.
- Using an open-source process to maintain and update the standards.
- Delivering these standards as data science certifications offered by the Alliance members to their professional members, with processes to hold certified members accountable for their professional status in this area.
- Using these standards as criteria for Alliance members to accredit data science degrees, and data science modules of associated degrees, as contributing to certification.

For more information, contact Claire Penketh, Senior Press Officer at BCS, the Chartered Institute for IT, at claire.penketh@bcs.uk or 07727247984