Young Hans

What recruiters will truly seek from 2026 data science graduates

RECRUITERS NOW PRIORITISE STRATEGIC THINKING, ETHICAL AI AWARENESS, AND PRODUCTION-READY SKILLS OVER TECHNICAL BASICS ALONE

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The data science landscape is not merely evolving; it is undergoing a profound transformation. The graduate of 2021, equipped with Python, SQL, and regression models, no longer represents the ideal profile for 2026. As artificial intelligence becomes deeply embedded across industries, regulations tighten, and business challenges grow more complex, recruiters are redefining expectations. For the class of 2026, securing a leading role will depend not only on technical expertise but on adaptability, ethical judgment, and strategic business understanding.

The foundational bedrock: Mastery of the modern stack

Core technical skills remain essential, but expectations have advanced. Python and SQL are baseline requirements rather than differentiators. Recruiters increasingly expect familiarity with orchestration tools such as Dagster and Prefect, MLOps platforms like MLflow and Kubeflow, and cloud ecosystems including AWS SageMaker, Google Vertex AI, and Azure ML. The ability to transition a model from experimentation to a scalable, monitored production environment is now fundamental.

Large Language Models (LLMs) are reshaping the field. While pre-training massive models is not mandatory, graduates must understand transformer architecture, retrieval-augmented generation (RAG), and fine-tuning methods such as LoRA. Beyond simple API usage, recruiters value candidates who can customise LLMs for business workflows while understanding cost, limitations, and bias implications.

The strategic shift: Problem discovery and translation

The role of a data scientist has expanded beyond technical execution. Recruiters now prioritise "problem discovery." Graduates must demonstrate the ability to navigate ambiguous business contexts, identify high-impact opportunities, and collaborate with domain experts across functions.

Equally important is "executive fluency"—the ability to translate model performance into business value. Communicating improvements in terms of revenue growth, risk reduction, or customer experience distinguishes the modern data scientist. While tools like Tableau and Power BI support visualisation, the core capability lies in articulating measurable business outcomes.

Ethics and governance as core competencies

As AI systems influence high-stakes decisions, ethical awareness has become integral. Recruiters increasingly assess knowledge of regulatory frameworks such as the EU AI Act and practical approaches to fairness, accountability, and transparency.

Graduates should be prepared to explain how they evaluate bias, ensure reproducibility, and maintain data lineage. Familiarity with explainability tools like SHAP and LIME, along with human-in-the-loop design principles, demonstrates readiness to build trustworthy systems rather than isolated algorithms.

Systems thinking and collaboration

The era of standalone models has passed. Data scientists must adopt a systems mindset, recognising that models operate within broader ecosystems involving pipelines, deployment frameworks, user interfaces, and feedback loops. Awareness of data quality, retraining cycles, and performance monitoring is critical.

Cross-functional collaboration is equally essential. Successful candidates show experience working with engineers on CI/CD processes, product managers on defining KPIs, and designers on user-centric solutions. Evidence of multidisciplinary teamwork strengthens employability.

Learning agility in a rapidly changing field

With the rapid pace of technological advancement, learning agility has become one of the most valued traits. Recruiters seek individuals who continuously update their knowledge, experiment with new tools, and critically assess emerging trends.

A dynamic portfolio often speaks louder than a resume. GitHub repositories showcasing evolving projects, engagement with new research, or contributions to open-source initiatives reflect adaptability and initiative.

The graduate portfolio: A blueprint

- Portfolio Over Resume: A dynamic GitHub with well-documented projects, including a production-like end-to-end pipeline, an LLM application addressing a real problem, and a clear analysis of ethical considerations.
- The "T-Shaped" Depth: Deep, hands-on expertise in one or two advanced areas complemented by broad business and communication skills.
- Narrative-Driven Interviews: Prepared not just to solve a coding test, but to articulate the "why" behind past projects, the trade-offs made, the business impact achieved, and the lessons learned from failure.

The ideal 2026 graduate presents a holistic profile: a well-documented project portfolio, deep expertise in selected areas, and strong communication skills. Beyond solving technical problems, they articulate the reasoning behind decisions, the trade-offs considered, the measurable impact delivered, and lessons drawn from challenges. In this transformed landscape, success belongs to those who combine technical excellence with strategic insight, ethical responsibility, and continuous learning.

(The author is Director – Bachelor of Data Science, SP Jain School of Global Management)

Accountancy exam rated moderate, balanced

The CBSE Class 12 Accountancy board examination was rated moderate in difficulty and largely aligned with the prescribed syllabus, according to feedback from teachers and students.

Rajan Dutta, PGT Accountancy at Silverline Prestige School, said the question paper reflected a balanced mix of theory and practical components. Most questions were drawn from the NCERT textbook and topics emphasised during classroom teaching. The paper included case-based and application-oriented questions designed to assess conceptual clarity rather than rote learning. Numerical questions were generally straightforward, though a few required careful calculations and step-by-step presentation.

"The Accountancy paper was fair and tested students' understanding of core concepts. Those who practised consistently and revised class materials found it manageable," Dutta said.

Students described the examination as moderate overall. While many found the structure familiar and manageable, some noted that certain case-study questions were slightly time-consuming. Overall, the paper was viewed as a well-balanced assessment that effectively evaluated students' conceptual understanding, analytical ability, and application skills in Accountancy.

CIM 2026 highlights AI, research ethics and industry-ready methodologies

The International Conference on Contemporary Issues in Management (CIM) 2026, hosted by the International School of Management Excellence in Bengaluru, brought together academicians, researchers and industry professionals to deliberate on artificial intelligence, research ethics and evolving industry expectations. The conference was the conferring of the Lifetime Achievement Award on T. V. Rao, a pioneer in human resource development and co-founder of the National HRD Network. In his address, Dr. Rao emphasised the need to balance technological advancement with human judgment. He noted that while AI can perform tasks efficiently, creativity and contextual decision-making remain uniquely human strengths.

Panel discussions throughout the conference examined how AI is reshaping research practices in management education. Speakers observed that AI tools are increasingly being used for literature reviews, data organisation and drafting support. However, concerns were raised about unverified outputs, fabricated references and plagiarism risks. Participants stressed that AI should serve as an aid rather than a substitute for independent analysis and critical thinking.

Ethical considerations emerged as a central theme. Faculty members highlighted the importance of transparency in AI-assisted research and the responsibility of academic supervisors in ensuring originality and integrity.

The conference also reflected changing research trends among students. Session chairs noted a shift from traditional statistical tools such as ANOVA and regression towards advanced techniques including structural equation modelling (SEM), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and machine learning models like Random Forest and XGBoost.

Another recurring discussion focused on bridging the gap between academia and industry. Panelists underscored the need to align research methodologies with practical business applications to enhance employability and relevance.

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IIT Roorkee to develop AI-driven BMS for energy storage

Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with MaxVolt Energy to collaborate on the development of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven Battery Management Systems (BMS) for energy storage and electric mobility applications.

The partnership will focus on integrating AI and Machine Learning (ML) algorithms into next-generation BMS platforms. The proposed systems aim to enable real-time monitoring, predictive diagnostics, adaptive charging protocols, and improved thermal management for lithium-based batteries.

According to officials, the research initiative will also work on enhancing the accuracy of State-of-Charge (SoC) and State-of-Health (SoH) estimations. The objective is to improve battery lifecycle management, reduce degradation, and support performance under varying operational and climatic conditions.

A key component of the collaboration includes incorporating predictive maintenance features. By analysing battery performance data and estimating remaining life cycles, the system is expected to assist in decisions related to battery reuse, refurbishment, or recycling. The research will be aligned with Indian grid and environmental conditions.

The joint programme will involve faculty members, research scholars, and engineering teams from both institutions. The teams will work on designing, prototyping, and validating AI-enabled BMS solutions. Vishal Gupta, Co-Founder and Technical Director at MaxVolt Energy and MaxVolt ReEarth, stated that the collaboration aims to strengthen research and development efforts in advanced battery technologies. He also indicated that a Centre of Excellence is proposed to be set up at the IIT Roorkee campus to support research on second-life battery reusability detection using BMS technologies.

HOW TO MASTER MOCK TEST ANALYSIS

How structured analysis can sharpen accuracy, speed, and exam strategy

Taking mock tests is an essential part of exam preparation, but their true value lies in how effectively they are analysed. Many students focus only on the final score, overlooking the deeper insights that mock tests provide. A structured analysis can transform mistakes into learning opportunities and significantly improve overall performance.

The first step in analysing a mock test is to go beyond marks and examine accuracy. Identify how many questions were attempted correctly, incorrectly, and left unanswered. This helps in understanding whether the issue lies in conceptual clarity, careless errors, or poor time management. A high number of incorrect answers may indicate guesswork or gaps in understanding, while too many unattempted questions may suggest slow problem-solving speed.

Next, conduct a topic-wise analysis. Break down performance according to subjects and chapters. This will reveal strengths and weak areas clearly. For instance, you may perform well in theory-based questions but struggle with numerical or application-based ones. Recognising such patterns allows you to plan targeted revision rather than revisiting the entire syllabus.

Time analysis is equally important. Review how much time was spent on each section or question. Did you spend too long on difficult problems? Did you rush through easier ones and make careless mistakes? Effective time allocation is crucial in competitive exams, and mock tests provide the perfect opportunity to refine this strategy.

Another critical aspect is reviewing mistakes carefully. Do not just note the correct answer — understand why your response was wrong. Was it due to a conceptual gap, misinterpretation of the question, calculation error, or overconfidence? Maintaining an error log can help track recurring mistakes and ensure they are not repeated in future tests.

Comparative performance tracking also plays a role. Instead of focusing on one test score, observe trends over multiple mocks. Consistent improvement in accuracy and percentile ranking indicates progress, while stagnation signals the need for strategy adjustments.

Practical tips for effective mock test analysis

- Analyse the test within 24 hours while the paper is still fresh in your mind.
- Categorise mistakes into conceptual, calculation, and time-management errors.
- Revise weak topics immediately after identifying them.
- Reattempt incorrectly answered questions without time pressure.
- Track progress through a performance journal or spreadsheet.

When approached systematically, mock test analysis becomes a powerful tool for improvement. It shifts preparation from random practice to strategic learning, helping students steadily convert effort into measurable success.