Solutions Architect

Basic information

Band: B
Job family: Technical
Terms: Permanent
Location: Cheltenham

Reports to: Lead Solutions Architect
Team: Enterprise Architecture
Business unit: Technology

Role purpose:

The Solutions Architect (SA) is responsible for 'translating' business requirements into IT solutions, taking into account the complexity of existing IT systems, through effective negotiation of the priority of scope and requirements, to help the organisation get best value from its IT investment.

The SA is required to design and provide technical support, through the delivery of solutions that meet the requirements of the business, support the IT Strategy, and are aligned with the IT architecture. Architecture considerations include data, applications, infrastructure, integration, interfaces, security, scalability, and performance, as well as product transition and support documentation. The SA will represent projects to the IT governance process, and support stakeholders in representing the project to the broader UCAS corporate governance.

In collaboration with other key stakeholders and contributors, the SA will produce the detailed technical sections of architecture documents and artefacts, including code examples required by development teams. Once completed, they will then review these deliverables throughout the development and delivery stages, and be accountable for the outputs being as requested, and fitting with the UCAS and IT Strategy/roadmap.

Key duties and responsibilities:

- Translate business requirements into cost-effective IT solutions, taking into account the complexity of existing IT systems, working with a number of technologies including, but not limited to, Salesforce, Mulesoft, AWS, Drupal, and Microsoft.
- Support the development of the overall IT Strategy, and technical architectural blueprint.

- Analyse enterprise architecture artefacts, and validate the completeness of technical and business requirements for the purpose of designing sound technical solutions and services, highlighting inconsistencies and gaps.
- Develop and ensure compliance to UCAS' technical architecture standards and policies (across application, integration, data, and security layers), as aligned with enterprise architecture standards and policies.
- Design technical solutions and services to meet business and operational requirements.
- Ensure that technology architecture roadmaps and blueprints are developed, maintained, and integrated within the process of the overall IT Strategy development and technology planning, including service transition.
- Define architectural considerations across data, applications, infrastructure, integration, interfaces, security, scalability, and performance, as well as product transition and support documentation.
- Produce options and, where necessary, conduct feasibility studies, for delivery of the business requirements and key non-functional requirements.
- Estimate the cost of implementing requirements and advising on high risk/high cost/complex solution/service aspects where these could be omitted/reduced, or where requirement change could result in a more cost-effective and lower risk implementation.
- Utilise the overall IT architecture strategy to recommend project delivery approach, typically reuse, package purchase, in-house build, or outsourced build.
- Accountable for the production of system designs, according to agreed design standards and patterns, while taking account of the differing requirements of in-house and outsource development approaches.
- Set functional, non-functional, and architectural acceptance criteria, and evaluate potential products against those criteria.
- Maintain a holistic understanding of UCAS' technology and services estate, and UCAS-specific IP.
- Work with the Enterprise Architecture Team, to define and maintain the overall IT architecture, applications portfolio, architecture vision, and design patterns, and promote these within IT, and to the business.
- Provide consultancy services to the business teams, to help the business maximise the capability from current and future IT technologies.
- Track and understand emerging technologies. and advise on the use of them while developing solution designs.
- Provide consultancy services to IT functions in UCAS' customer groups, to support their technical queries.

Accountabilities:

Financial authorities:

- No financial authority.

Non-financial authorities:

- Authority to represent the company with third party suppliers.
- Occasional travel in the UK (if required to attend IT conferences).

Primary customers/stakeholders
Internal:

- UCAS staff in IT and across all business units, up to Director level.

External:

- Technology providers and suppliers, partner consultancies and other organisations, IT functions for external stakeholders.

Person specification:

- Mulesoft ESB, AWS SNS, or relative integration experience.
- Understanding of Salesforce CRM.
- Deep understanding of AWS components and product features.
- Microsoft technologies (Azure, O365, SharePoint, Windows Server, Active Directory, DNS) and .Net architectures.
- Microsoft SQL Server, Oracle, and MySQL database technologies.
- Drupal content management system.
- Atlassian (Jira, Confluence, BitBucket).
- Knowledge of agile ways of working, specifically scaled agile (SAFe).
- Knowledge of service management best-practice, based on ITIL V3.
- A high degree of personal initiative, with the drive and ability to meet challenging goals and work closely with developers.
- Flexibility to recognise, adapt, and work effectively within diverse situations, with various individuals or groups with differing perspectives and objectives.
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills, with an ability to influence stakeholders up to Director level, and across the organisation.
- The ability to perform well under pressure, with strong problem-solving and negotiating skills.
- Possesses determination and persistence.
- Demonstrate strong analytical ability and attention to detail.

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-focused – We understand what our customers want, and we act on their changing needs.

Collaborative – We collectively create an engaging and positive work environment.

Accountable – We take ownership of our individual and organisational performance.

Service excellence – We realise, grow, and maximise our potential.

Trusted – Individuals are trusted to make informed decisions and take appropriate risks.