



Professional Certifications

One of the most important aspects of a degree in a quantitative field is being familiar with statistical software packages to program, model, and analyze data. Not surprisingly, one of the most common questions we hear as recruiters is, “Which software is best or most important to know?”

There is no easy answer to this question. Depending on which school you go to or what program you’re in, different packages may be emphasized in the curriculum. As most of you know, there are many to choose from: SAS, R, SPSS, SQL, Excel, Matlab, JMP, Python, etc. The one your instructor or school chooses depends on what you’ll be using it for, or simply which one a teacher personally prefers.

In our experience, clients are generally more inclined to ask for knowledge of SAS when looking for candidates, though that does not mean you are necessarily at a disadvantage if you learned different statistical software. Using any tool will be helpful in broadening your skill set, but certain tools are used more than others. While in marketing analytics specifically SAS, SPSS, SQL, and R are the most widely used, among these, SAS is definitely the predominant tool in the field.

R has gained popularity over last five years in academia because it is free and open-source, and it’s able to handle large data sets. Some startups and smaller companies are starting to embrace R too, but the majority of our clients are continuing to use SAS.

We encourage all of our candidates to become familiar with SAS if they aren’t already. It is important to be able to show employers that you not only took classes in statistics, but that you are comfortable using the statistical software in a real world setting. Plus, if you are able to pick up SAS skills on your own, it demonstrates your determination and ability to learn new software – two things that are key in the corporate world. Try to integrate SAS learning into your course work, projects, thesis, internships, or on your own time.

One of the best ways for entry level candidates to prove to employers that they are proficient in SAS is to become [SAS certified](#) via the SAS Institute. The SAS Certification Exam tests your knowledge in a way that’s meant to emphasize industry experience over strictly academic learning. There are several options of the test available, but for candidates who are seeking a position within marketing analytics, the options are the Base SAS Certification Exam, SAS Predictive Modeling Exam or the SAS Certificate Statistical Business Analyst. We recommend that candidates take the test before they graduate – the certification is proof that you’ve passed a test which measures your abilities to a high standard.

The important thing to remember in any statistical training is that you want to highlight your capabilities beyond the classroom. Whether it’s SAS or another tool, being familiar with real and large data sets is critical in standing out.