



CompassPoint Careers

Navigate Your Future

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

Business and Management

The Numbers You Need to Know

<p>596,000+</p> <p>Students enrolled in Business and Management UK</p> <p><i>HESA 2024/25</i></p>	<p>£31,268</p> <p>Average graduate starting salary</p> <p><i>Graduate-Jobs.com, Apr 2026</i></p>	<p>89%</p> <p>In relevant employment within 15 months</p> <p><i>HESA Graduate Outcomes 2022/23</i></p>
<p>21%</p> <p>Of all UK higher education students</p> <p><i>HESA 2024/25</i></p>	<p>+44%</p> <p>Rise in graduate scheme applications in 2025</p> <p><i>ISE Student Survey 2025</i></p>	<p>Very likely</p> <p>Require 2:1 or above for most graduate roles</p> <p><i>Graduate-Jobs.com, 2026</i></p>

The Honest Market Picture

What your university careers service probably did not tell you

Business and Management is the single most popular graduate subject in the UK, accounting for 21% of all university enrolments. The breadth of the degree is its greatest strength and its greatest challenge — it opens doors across almost every sector, but it also means competing with a very large pool of graduates with similar qualifications. Standing out requires more than a degree. It requires strategy.

Graduate hiring fell 7% in 2025/26 while application volumes rose 44% in the same period. That means more graduates chasing fewer roles. Application volumes at major graduate schemes now regularly exceed 100 applicants per place. AI screening tools filter CVs before a human ever reads them. A generic, untailored application will not survive the first round. The graduates getting hired are the ones who understand the market, tailor every application, and present themselves with genuine commercial awareness.

Employment Outlook 2025 to 2029

- October and April are peak months for graduate Management job postings. Applications submitted outside these windows face significantly fewer available roles. Plan well ahead.
- ESG roles are growing rapidly across all business functions. Graduates who understand sustainability reporting and green finance are increasingly attractive to large employers planning net-zero commitments.
- AI literacy is now a baseline expectation, not a differentiator. Employers expect entry-level candidates to understand how AI tools apply to data analysis, customer service and operations.
- The CMI qualification is becoming increasingly valued for those targeting competitive management roles. Many employers fund it for graduate hires.
- Postgraduates earn significantly more — median postgraduate salary is £47,000 compared to £42,000 for graduates. An MBA or specialist MSc can accelerate progression significantly.
- Consulting and professional services remain the most competitive entry point. The Big Four and MBB collectively receive millions of applications annually for a few thousand graduate places.

Sources: ISE Student Employment Survey 2025; HESA Graduate Outcomes 2022/23; DfE Graduate Labour Market Statistics 2024; Graduate-Jobs.com April 2026; CMI Management Futures Report 2025

What Employers Actually Want in 2026

Skill	Why it matters	How to demonstrate it
Commercial awareness	Employers rank this above experience in hiring decisions	Read industry news daily; reference real business examples in every application
Data literacy	Data-driven decisions are now standard across all business functions	Excel, Google Sheets, basic SQL; Google Data Analytics certificate (free)
AI literacy	Expected at entry level across most sectors — not a differentiator but a baseline	Use AI tools in your work and be able to discuss them intelligently at interview
Leadership evidence	Even at graduate level, employers want proof you can lead	Society roles, sports captaincy, team projects, part-time management experience
Stakeholder communication	The ability to present and persuade separates good candidates from great ones	Presentations, reports, client-facing work experience, debating or public speaking
Tailored applications	Generic CVs are rejected before a human reads them — AI screening filters first	Every application must reference the specific company, role and market position

Top Graduate Employers and Schemes

Consulting and Professional	Retail and FMCG	Finance and Banking	Public Sector
Deloitte, PwC, EY, KPMG McKinsey, Accenture Oliver Wyman Boston Consulting Group	Lidl, M and S, Tesco Sainsbury's, Unilever P and G, L'Oreal Coca-Cola	Barclays, HSBC, Lloyds Goldman Sachs JP Morgan Natwest Group	Civil Service Fast Stream NHS Management Local Government Transport for London

The Mistake Most Business Graduates Make

The single most common reason Business and Management graduates fail to get interviews is applying with a generic CV that makes no mention of the specific company or role. A CV that says 'seeking a challenging role in a dynamic organisation' tells an employer nothing. Business graduates are expected to demonstrate commercial awareness from the very first line. If you cannot show you understand the company, its market position and why you want to work there specifically, your application will not progress.

The second mistake is treating every application the same. The skills you lead with for a Deloitte consulting application are different to those you lead with for a Lidl management scheme. Both are Business and Management roles. Neither wants the same CV. Tailor every single application — no exceptions.

How to Stand Out in 2026

- Tailor every application. Research the company, understand their market, reference specifics in your cover letter and CV summary. Generic applications are filtered by AI before a human sees them.
- Get a data qualification. Even a free Google or Microsoft data analytics certificate sets you apart from the majority of Business graduates who have none.
- Apply in September and October for January starts, and January to March for September starts. Many graduate schemes close before the deadline when they fill up.
- Build your LinkedIn presence now. Recruiters search LinkedIn before they advertise roles. A strong profile with relevant keywords means inbound opportunities.
- Get commercial experience on your CV, even if unpaid. Helping a small business, running a university society budget, freelance projects — evidence beats claims every time.
- Practice case study and competency interviews. The Big Four and major graduate schemes use structured interview formats. Preparation is the difference between offer and rejection.

Application Timeline: When to Apply

September to October	The most important window of the year. Major consulting, finance and management scheme applications open. Many close early — apply immediately, not at the deadline.
October to December	Online assessments and video interviews begin. Situational judgement tests and numerical reasoning are standard. Practice these before this window opens.
January to March	Assessment centres for autumn applicants. Second wave of applications opens for April starts. Retail and FMCG management schemes typically open in this window.
April to June	Final-round interviews and offers for the main autumn cohort. Summer internship placements begin. Many graduate offers are made to previous summer interns.
Year-round	SMEs, startups and public sector bodies hire on a rolling basis. LinkedIn, Indeed and Prospects are the primary channels. Set up alerts and apply within 48 hours.

CompassPoint Careers gives Business and Management graduates the CV, LinkedIn profile and interview preparation to compete at the highest level. Book a free 15-minute discovery call.

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