



CompassPoint Careers

Navigate Your Future

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

Marketing and Communications

The Numbers You Need to Know

<p>45,000+</p> <p>Students in Marketing and Communications degrees UK</p> <p><i>HESA 2024/25</i></p>	<p>£26,500</p> <p>Average graduate starting salary, marketing sector</p> <p><i>Graduate-Jobs.com, Apr 2026</i></p>	<p>82%</p> <p>In relevant employment within 15 months</p> <p><i>HESA Graduate Outcomes 2022/23</i></p>
<p>£1.1Bn</p> <p>UK digital advertising spend growth in 2025</p> <p><i>IAB UK, 2025</i></p>	<p>£35,000+</p> <p>Marketing manager salary at 3 to 5 years experience</p> <p><i>Glassdoor UK, 2025</i></p>	<p>Top 3</p> <p>Most in-demand skills: data, content, SEO</p> <p><i>CIM Graduate Survey 2025</i></p>

The Honest Market Picture

What your university careers service probably did not tell you

Marketing and Communications is one of the broadest graduate sectors in the UK — and one of the most misunderstood. Many graduates assume a marketing degree automatically leads to a marketing role. It does not. The sector is crowded, entry-level salaries are modest compared to finance or law, and the most in-demand skills are technical rather than creative. Data analytics, SEO, paid media and CRM management are what hiring managers are searching for. Graduates who arrive with these skills get interviews. Those who arrive with only a degree and enthusiasm do not.

The good news is that marketing roles exist across every sector — FMCG, tech, financial services, media, the public sector and beyond. Progression can be fast for people who deliver measurable results. The CIM qualification adds credibility and signals commitment. Graduate schemes at large consumer brands are competitive, but agency roles, in-house positions and SME marketing jobs offer faster development and genuine ownership from day one.

Employment Outlook 2025 to 2029

- Digital marketing continues to outpace traditional disciplines. Roles in paid social, programmatic advertising, email automation and marketing analytics are growing at the fastest rate across all subsectors.
- AI tools are transforming content production, campaign analysis and audience targeting. Graduates who can use AI to improve output quality and efficiency — not just generate text — are significantly more hireable.
- First-party data strategy is a growing priority for large brands following the decline of third-party cookies. Graduates with CRM, data segmentation and customer analytics experience are in high demand.
- The CIM Chartered Marketer qualification is the professional benchmark for mid-career progression. Many employers fund it. Referencing your intention to pursue it at interview demonstrates long-term commitment.
- PR and communications roles are evolving rapidly. Crisis communications, influencer strategy and integrated campaign management are the growth areas. Traditional press release writing is in decline.
- In-house marketing teams at tech companies, retailers and financial services firms now rival agency roles for salary and creative scope, and often offer better work-life balance and faster progression.

Sources: HESA Graduate Outcomes 2022/23; IAB UK Digital Adspend Report 2025; CIM Graduate Marketing Survey 2025; Graduate-Jobs.com Apr 2026; Glassdoor UK 2025; ISE Student Employment Survey 2025

What Employers Actually Want in 2026

Skill	Why it matters	How to demonstrate it
Data and analytics	The most in-demand skill gap in marketing. Employers consistently rank it above creativity	Google Analytics 4; Meta Ads Manager; Excel pivot tables; any data visualisation project
Content creation and copywriting	Every brand needs people who can write clearly and create content that performs	Personal blog, newsletter or social account with real engagement; university publications
SEO and paid media	Digital performance marketing is the engine of most modern marketing departments	Google Digital Garage (free); HubSpot certifications; personal website with SEO work
Social media strategy	Posting is not a strategy. Employers want people who understand algorithms and metrics	Show audience growth, engagement rates and content strategy — not just follower counts
Project and campaign management	Marketing roles require coordinating multiple stakeholders, agencies and deadlines	Society events; university campaigns; internship work with clear deliverables and outcomes
Commercial awareness	Marketing exists to drive revenue. Graduates who understand ROI stand out immediately	Reference real campaigns; talk about results not just activity in every application

Top Graduate Employers and Schemes

Advertising and PR	Brand and FMCG	Media and Publishing	Digital and In-house
WPP, Publicis, Omnicom Edelman, Weber Shandwick Ogilvy, TBWA McCann Worldgroup	Unilever, P and G L'Oreal, Diageo PepsiCo, Mars Reckitt	News UK, Reach PLC Condé Nast, Hearst BBC, ITV, Channel 4 The Guardian	Google, Meta, Amazon Spotify, Just Eat NHS, Civil Service John Lewis, Boots

The Mistake Most Marketing Graduates Make

The single most common reason marketing graduates fail to get interviews is having no evidence of real work. A CV listing modules and society memberships tells a recruiter almost nothing. Marketing is a results-driven profession. Employers want to see campaigns you ran, audiences you grew, metrics you improved. A personal newsletter with 200 subscribers that you can speak to analytically beats a first-class degree with no practical evidence behind it.

The second mistake is applying to graduate schemes at large FMCG or advertising brands without any digital skills. Brands like Unilever, P and G and L'Oreal receive thousands of applications and screen heavily for data literacy and digital channel knowledge. Candidates who cannot demonstrate comfort with analytics, paid media or SEO are filtered out early. Build the technical skills first, then apply.

How to Stand Out in 2026

- Get Google Analytics 4 and Google Ads certified before you apply anywhere. Both are free. They demonstrate baseline digital competency that the majority of applicants do not have.
- Build something real. A blog, newsletter, social account or small business with actual metrics you can talk about is more persuasive than any module grade.
- Complete HubSpot's free certifications in content marketing, email marketing and inbound. They are industry-recognised and take less than a week in total.
- Target agency roles and in-house positions at mid-size companies alongside graduate schemes. Agencies develop skills faster; in-house roles offer breadth. Both are excellent starting points.
- Reference specific campaigns in every application. Name the brand, describe the objective, explain what worked. Generic applications that could have been sent to any employer are rejected without being read.
- Get the CIM Foundation Certificate on your radar. It signals professional commitment and sets you apart from graduates with only academic credentials.

Application Timeline: When to Apply

September to October	Major FMCG and advertising graduate scheme applications open. Unilever, P and G and L'Oreal deadlines often fall before Christmas. Apply immediately.
October to December	Online assessments and video interviews begin for large graduate schemes. Agency and in-house roles open on a rolling basis throughout autumn.
January to March	Assessment centres for FMCG, media and advertising graduate schemes. Second wave of agency and in-house applications opens for September starts.
March to June	Summer internship placements begin. Many agencies and in-house teams convert strong interns directly. Treat every internship as a six-week interview.
Year-round	Digital marketing roles at agencies, tech companies and retailers hire continuously. LinkedIn and The Drum Jobs are the primary channels.

CompassPoint Careers gives Marketing and Communications 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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