

Getting into...

Marketing, Advertising & PR



Working in Marketing, Advertising & PR is open to anyone, regardless of the degree subject they have studied.

Find out more about the range of opportunities available and how you can make the most of your time at university to develop relevant skills and work experience, which will boost your chances of success.

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Exploring Your Options

What is the difference between Marketing, Advertising and PR?

All three of these areas concern promoting an organisation and its products or services, but there are some key differences. Marketing is the overall process of raising awareness of a brand, product or service, whilst advertising and public relations are methods of promotion that sit within marketing.

Advertising is a method of targeting your audience, usually through media placement e.g. television, radio, print publications, posters or online. PR focuses on maintaining the good reputation of the company in the media or community. It is common that jobs have responsibilities that cross over into all of these areas, particularly in entry level roles, so being flexible and able to meet the changing needs of the industry are key.

Typical roles

Marketing

Two key areas of marketing where you are likely to find a high number of graduate level roles are:

Direct marketing

Targeted communications with existing and potential customers to promote products or services, through a range of channels including direct mail, print, SMS and telemarketing. Roles involve copywriting, proofing, project management and campaign analysis.

Digital marketing

Marketing across digital platforms including social media, blogs, websites, targeted emails or online newsletters. Insight from analytics is used to monitor audience behaviour and influence future campaigns.

Example roles aimed at new graduates include: Direct Marketing Officer, Social Media Executive and Marketing Assistant. Sometimes it is not always clear from the job title how senior a role is (many roles are at 'executive' level, which is a common entry level title). Always check the person specification to see what skills and experience the role requires.

Advertising

Advertising is fast-moving and highly competitive. It involves finding new and innovative ways to promote an idea or product and get key messages out to potential customers. Some key areas include media planning/buying, creative, art direction/copywriting, and account management.

Opportunities are most likely to be found within an agency, working with a range of clients on projects across different industries. Working to the client's brief (instructions), campaigns are developed and distributed across channels including TV, radio, newspapers, public spaces and online. **Example job titles for new graduates include:** Account Executive, Copywriter and Account Planner.

Public Relations

PR professionals are responsible for a company's brand image and use a variety of media and communication channels to build, maintain and manage the reputation of their clients. PR teams come up with publicity campaigns and identify the best ways for clients to promote their brands to the press and their customers.

Typical work could include media relations, lobbying (see [Getting into Politics Guide](#)), speaking at conferences, organising community events and writing press releases. **Example job titles for new graduates include:** PR Officer, PR Account Executive and Communications Assistant.

Typical employers

As a business support function, marketing roles can be found in almost every industry, from engineering and law firms, to publishers and charities.

Small or medium sized enterprises (SMEs)

SMEs make up over 99% of businesses, meaning this is where most vacancies for graduates are found, so don't just search for jobs at organisations that you have already heard of. Working in a smaller company, you are more likely to have a broad range of responsibilities, particularly as a new graduate, giving you insight into, and experience of, different areas before deciding if you would like to specialise in a particular one. This is different to a larger organisation, where roles might focus on a particular area (e.g. social media) from the outset.

The recruitment process tends to be shorter and more interview based, and vacancies are available throughout the year as the need arises. SMEs do not always advertise opportunities widely - many are found through networking and speculative applications.

Large organisations

Larger organisations across all sectors (Finance, Higher Education or Technology to name a few) will have their own marketing and PR departments who work across a range of projects and media. This is known as an in-house marketing department. They will often enlist the services of an agency for their advertising needs.

When people think of Marketing, Advertising and PR they often think about adverts and campaigns for products and services targeted at the general public. However, there are a huge number of jobs that involve marketing businesses to other businesses. This is known as business to business (B2B) marketing. For example, a supplier selling computers, coffee or printing paper in large volumes to Queen Mary. Key elements of these roles include building and maintaining client relationships, understanding clients' objectives and generating business leads.

Take a look at Prospects' [Marketing, advertising and PR](#) page to find out more about the industry.

Getting Industry Ready

In this section, we will talk about the kinds of skills and experiences employers might be looking for within this industry, and how you can go about gaining them yourself. What employers are looking for will vary depending on the role, but below is a general overview of key areas you might like to think about. It is important to always read the job description carefully to see exactly what the job responsibilities are, and what skills and experiences are required.

What employers want

Qualifications

Marketing, Advertising and PR is such a broad sector requiring a range of creative, analytical and communication skills, that you do not need to have studied a specific degree. Instead you need to be able to explain how your skills and experience (including those gained from your degree) are relevant to the role you are applying for. Essentially, you will be marketing yourself to the employer!

Some employers might value qualifications related to marketing (especially if your undergraduate degree is unrelated), but this does not replace relevant work experience and passion for the industry. Taking short courses is a great way to gauge whether further study is right for you before you commit to anything bigger.

Skills

Here are some key skills many employers within this sector are looking for when hiring graduates. As was mentioned before, it is important to always read the job description carefully to see exactly what the job responsibilities are, and what skills and experiences are required for that particular role.

Communication skills

You need to understand the consumer/client in order to sell the key messages of your product or service. Strong written and verbal communication skills are needed alongside the ability to explain complex concepts simply and clearly to a range of audiences.

Creativity

You may be involved in coming up with new and exciting ways of branding products and services. For this, you will need good writing skills and the ability to contribute fresh ideas in the planning of a new campaign.

Teamwork

Campaigns can involve working with a number of individuals and teams, so being able to build effective working relationships is key.

Digital skills

A high proportion of marketing and advertising is now online, so strong IT skills are essential, as well as social media experience across a range of channels. Some roles may require coding or design skills, so include these on your CV to help you to stand out from the crowd.

Data analysis

A large part of marketing involves collecting and interpreting data in order to understand user behaviour e.g. number of hits on a particular webpage. You can find plenty of data analysis roles where problem solving and numerical skills will be required.

Commercial awareness

It is important to understand the needs of your clients or customers, so that you know what will be of interest to them and what will sell. When you apply for jobs or work experience, understanding the business side of the organisation (i.e. how they make an income) can set you apart from other candidates. This kind of knowledge is known as commercial awareness, and will allow you to make informed decisions.

You should aim to know and understand basic terminology used within the industry, such as SEO (search engine optimisation) or CPC (cost per click). During the application process you might also be asked to talk about a particular marketing campaign, and why you thought it was/wasn't effective.

FOCUS ON AI

AI is now deeply embedded in the workflows of marketing and PR professionals, transforming how campaigns are designed, executed, and measured:

How AI Can Be Used:

- **Hyper-Personalization:** AI analyses user data to deliver tailored content, timing, and formats across channels.
- **Content Creation & Optimization:** Tools generate blog posts, social media captions, and press releases, ensuring brand consistency and SEO alignment.
- **Media Monitoring & Social Listening:** AI tracks brand mentions and sentiment across platforms, helping manage reputation and respond to crises.
- **Predictive Intelligence:** Emerging AI systems anticipate audience reactions and optimize messaging strategies before launch.
- **Algorithm-Aware Strategy:** PR professionals now design content that aligns with AI-driven distribution platforms like social media and search engines.

How New Graduates Can Upskill Using AI

AI literacy is now a core expectation for marketing graduates. Here's how they can upskill effectively

Practical Skills to Develop:

- **Prompt Engineering:** Crafting effective inputs for generative AI tools.
- **Data Literacy:** Understanding segmentation, algorithmic bias, and performance metrics.
- **Tool Proficiency:** Hands-on experience with platforms like Yarnit, HubSpot, and Creatio.
- **Ethical AI Use:** Navigating privacy, transparency, and responsible automation.

How to gain relevant skills and experiences

Use your time at university to develop the skills required by recruiters in this sector. Remember that part-time work, volunteering or involvement in clubs and societies can help you develop transferable skills.

Browse job descriptions

Get an idea of what skills and experience employers are looking for. This will help you to identify potential roles that might be of interest and areas you may need to develop. You can then target your applications and find relevant work experience where you can build these skills.

Build your online presence

Create a Twitter and LinkedIn account to start building your own social media presence. Social media plays a huge role in this sector, so familiarise yourself with a range of online platforms (e.g. Instagram, Tik Tok and Twitter) which you may need knowledge of when applying. Existing understanding of digital platforms can be demonstrated with your own personal accounts.

Building an online presence will also allow you to stay up to date with developments in the sector (you can follow organisations like [@MarketingWeekEd](#) or [@PRNewswire](#)), and in doing so build your commercial awareness.

Writing

There are plenty of ways that you can demonstrate strong written communication skills as a student. You can write for a [Queen Mary publication](#), or showcase your writing skills by setting up your own blog about a subject of your choosing (this is particularly effective if the topics covered on the blog relate to the area you would like to go into).

Volunteer

[Volunteer](#) for a charity to look after their blog, website or social media platforms. This can be a useful way to gain initial experience in this competitive area. When reaching out to people for opportunities (e.g. to help create content for their social media platforms) make sure to highlight your ideas, and why you think your help would be beneficial. It is easier to start with small organisations with less resource, rather than larger organisations where there will be a lot more competition.

Teach yourself/take a short course

[Taking a short course](#), or teaching yourself a new skill online, will demonstrate initiative and your motivation to enter into in the industry. There are lots of free online resources when it

comes to marketing, such as YouTube tutorials on using certain tools, and downloadable templates for campaigns and reports.

Be observant

Be aware of all the marketing that you see around you – from posters at bus shelters to social media campaigns. Think about what you see advertised where and when and how the adverts are targeted. Think about what you like, what you would change and why.

How can Careers and Enterprise help you?

There are a number of ways Careers and Enterprise can help you build skills and prepare for applying to opportunities.

Appointments

We run one-to-one appointments with expert career consultants who can talk to you about a variety of topics including your CV and applications, as well as give you career guidance and advice surrounding making career decisions. You can also book Practice Interview appointments to test your skills, for when you have an upcoming interview

Events

We hold a range of careers events throughout the year where you can learn more about an industry, network with employers and find out what people look for in a graduate.

Programmes

If you are looking to develop your skills, Careers & Enterprise is home to the [Aspire Programme: Queen Mary's Student Career Development Programme](#). These programmes take place alongside your degree, allowing you to gain vital employability skills to add to your CV, as well as raise your commercial awareness. Please note: Eligibility requirements apply

Online Resources

Our bank of online resources is a great place to go for careers support. We have guides (such as this one), templates for things like CVs and applications, as well as tools that you can use to build or improve a CV ([QM CareerSet](#)), practice for a psychometric test ([Graduates First](#)) or practice for a video interview ([ShortlistMe](#)).

Make the most of work experience opportunities

1. Discuss your expectations with the employer at the start, so you have the same understanding of what the experience will involve.
2. Always be polite, motivated and interested. Work experience can involve boring tasks, but being flexible, helpful and willing to get involved will make a good impression.
3. Be inquisitive and learn everything you can about the way the organisation works. How do they hire? What key skills are they looking for? What are the main issues affecting the organisation at the moment?
4. Talk to people who work at the organisation and find out what they do and how they got there. You might uncover job roles and employers that are new to you as well as pick up some helpful tips. Keeping in touch with people you meet can be a great way of finding out about future opportunities.
5. Ask for feedback at the end of the placement to identify your strengths and the skills you need to develop further.

For more information on where you can develop your skills and experiences, see the Resources section at the end of this guide.

Finding Opportunities

Graduate Schemes

Marketing and communications graduate schemes or graduate internships exist in organisations from banks to law firms, manufacturers and energy providers (e.g. [EE](#), [KPMG](#), [Nestlé](#) and [Marks & Spencers](#))

Most corporate schemes begin recruitment in the autumn term, nearly a year before the job starts. There are usually multiple application stages including psychometric tests and assessment centres. Note deadlines well in advance, and allow time to work on applications.

Gain work experience

This doesn't just have to be in marketing. Customer service experience can be a good step to progression, as it demonstrates an understanding of the consumer/client. Digital experience can also be a valuable addition to your CV. If there is a particular company you are interested in working for, regularly check their website for job adverts.

There is no one way of finding a job. Successful candidates are likely to be those that do a little of everything: apply to advertised jobs and work experience on job boards, attend events, network, make speculative applications and utilise personal contacts.

Build your online profile

LinkedIn is a useful tool for job-hunting and a crucial source of information which can help you prepare for applications and interviews. You optimise your current profile using [CareerSet](#). Update your profile regularly, highlighting your accomplishments, particularly your technical skills. Ask for recommendations from people you have worked with, and request connections with people you know.

Speculative applications

Enquiring whether organisations have any opportunities available is common in this sector. It can be particularly effective when sending to a 'warm contact' e.g. someone you met during work experience, at an event or interacted with before on Twitter. Many opportunities, especially in smaller organisations, are not advertised, so you could find yourself in the right place at the right time! (Although do keep in mind that some larger organisations may not accept this type of approach). Take a look at our speculative application resources.

Networking

Networking is about identifying professionals who are linked to what you want to do and developing a rapport with them. This will create a group of work-related contacts who may be able to give you help, information and advice. Work experience and roles in smaller organisations are often not formally advertised, so you could hear about opportunities through the people you know.

Students have found work experience through various methods. For example, by introducing themselves to employers at events or engaging in discussions on social media. Make sure you do this diplomatically so you don't cause offence, though! Make sure to follow the [Queen Mary Alumni LinkedIn page](#) to connect with graduates working in your chosen field.

Resources

Getting Industry Ready

Here are some resources that you can use to learn more about the industry, and begin searching for organisations to which you could send speculative applications. This list is by no means extensive, but you can use it as a starting point.

[Marketing Week](#)

Careers news and opportunities

[Campaign Live](#)

Marketing, advertising and media jobs, news and analysis

[Chartered Institute of Public Relations](#)

Marketing, advertising and PR roles at all levels

[IDM \(Institute of Direct and Digital Marketing\)](#)

Includes career advice, case studies and guides

[IPA ADMISSION](#)

Advice and information on working in advertising, media and marketing communications

Finding Opportunities

Here are some jobs boards for you to take a look at when searching for opportunities. Remember many organisations will post their jobs directly to their own website or social media platforms, so make sure that you are also looking there.

[Campaign Live](#)

Marketing, advertising and media jobs, news and analysis

[The Drum](#)

Marketing, advertising and PR roles at all levels

[Chartered Institute of Marketing](#)

Opportunities, job alerts and career advice

[PR Week Jobs](#)

Includes graduate level roles

[EMR Recruitment](#)

[IPA](#)