

Advertising, marketing and PR

Dynamic, diverse and fast-moving, this sector offers roles for graduates from all degree disciplines. There are some 10,000 agencies in the UK, from specialists to multinationals offering services across the full span of communication specialisms.

Employers look for creative graduates who have high-level communication, analytical, and organisational skills and a keen interest in digital and social media. Different roles at agencies commonly include creatives, account management, strategic planning, media planning and buying, and production.

Graduates from STEM subjects and people with IT skills are increasingly in demand because of data analytics to unlock insights into customer behaviour, and the potential for application of AI (artificial intelligence) to exploit the rapidly evolving digital landscape. The sector offers numerous opportunities for social media strategists, analysts, web developers, and user experience (UX) designers.

Fields of operation (and terminology) for agencies in the sector overlap, but can be broken down as follows:

- **Advertising** uses paid-for space across all media to motivate people to buy products and services, or to alter their attitudes.
- **Public Relations (PR)** involves managing and enhancing reputations (people, products or services), principally by influencing the media. Tools range from press releases to promotional events.



- **Public Affairs** is similar to PR but focuses on persuading policymakers to adopt particular viewpoints.
- **Marketing Agencies** will advise on brand strategy, management and communications, and provide services across the range of advertising, market research, media planning and buying, PR, distribution, sales strategy, etc.
- **Market Research** seeks to understand people's preferences to inform product development and/or marketing campaigns.

Opportunities exist in cities all over the UK but the main cluster of agencies are in London. Large agencies and PR consultancies are often international in scope, with some having a parent company based in another country.

Getting in and entry points

Most agencies recruit into specific roles as positions arise, with a few offering specific graduate schemes (and internship programmes). Applications for these often open during the summer – deadlines can fall early, some before the end of October.

Expect competition for advertised positions to be intense, but there are alternative routes into agencies. This is a highly networked sector. It is therefore very helpful to be visible and known: work experience is important, and speculative approaches for full-time roles, internships or work experience are often welcomed as they demonstrate interest, motivation and initiative.

These industries thrive on creativity, so think about making your speculative approach a little different too. Not all agencies want a traditional CV, and creative alternatives can sometimes be effective, such as an infographic or videographic CV. A website or blog are good forums to showcase skills, and it is important to use social media to keep in touch with agencies' latest work and to hear first about new opportunities – but candidates are advised to manage their own web-visibility carefully!

Agencies are not the only option however. Marketing and communication roles are needed in all sectors, and there are many prestigious graduate programmes with larger companies in brand management, marketing and market research (consumer business insight), and general management roles – deadlines often fall in November and December. You can also gain experience as an in-house marketing assistant, for example with a charity or technology firm, as a foundation to build on.

Extra-curricular ideas

- Get involved in the marketing of an event, fundraiser, or any aspect of promotion of a student society and enhance your use of social media.
- The Oxford Strategy Challenge, run by the Careers Service, gives you first-hand practical experience and insight and often has marketing and communication projects.
- Get involved promoting Oxford SU's campaigns.
- Stay abreast of the industry through key resources, such as *Marketing Week*; *Campaign Live*, and The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA) website.
- Apply to be 'brand ambassador' for a recruiter looking to raise their profile at Oxford.

Next steps

www.careers.ox.ac.uk/communications

Alumni profile

Georgina Weetch

What: Procter and Gamble (P&G) owns global brands like Oral B and Crest. P&G gives you responsibility from the start and focuses on developing people through on-the-job experience. Consequently, I've had the opportunity to work across lots of different sectors in my career (from fabric to pet care) and have worked in various countries. P&G has a 'promote from within' ethos so most of our senior leaders started as interns or graduates.

Why: At A-Level I studied History, Maths and Geography and I've always enjoyed using both sides of my brain. Marketing offers you the opportunity to do that – you need to be able to evaluate great advertising as well as understand business performance.

Growing a brand requires strategic and analytical thinking; working out why your brand is growing (or not) and how to evolve it; emotional intelligence as you work in a multi-functional team; and an eagerness to learn as the landscape continually changes. It's an exciting place to work because standing still isn't an option, so you're constantly thinking on your feet and finding new ways of doing things.

My organisation develops you as a business leader from day one. You're given a household name brand such as Gillette, Pampers or Fairy to grow with the support of a multi-functional team around you.

Advice: Use the opportunity whilst you are at university to get involved in societies, clubs or whatever to learn and develop leadership skills which you can use in applications. Focus on driving a result and be clear on the contribution you personally drove.

Be honest with yourself about your interests and skills. I thought I 'should' go into finance, law or consultancy as everyone around me seemed to be doing that, but I am glad I was honest with myself. If you've studied a humanities degree, it can be harder to take the leap to a career, as you must focus on skills you've developed in your degree rather than subject experience to lead you.

**Position**

UK Marketing Director, Procter & Gamble.

Background

BA History, Pembroke College, 2009

Alumni profile

Julia Manstead

What: I work as a strategist at a creative advertising agency. I look at the intersection between what consumers want or are interested in and how communications can be used to solve a brand's business problem. I also consider how the brand is positioned in comparison to competitors and how the brand fits into wider culture. That means stepping outside my own bubble, reading a wide range of news sources and, crucially, speaking to people (you can only get so far with data). My job is to then collate these insights into an inspiring brief for my creative colleagues to come up with the adverts themselves.

Why: The job involves a lot of problem-solving and, much like my languages degree, I love the sheer variety – you often work on multiple accounts, so you get to know different clients and industries. Agency life is also fast-paced, and I find working with creative, collaborative people incredibly fulfilling.

Advice: Be a consumer – look at adverts around you and consider what the brand is trying to do. Who are they targeting, what message are they trying to communicate and why? Look up ads that won at Cannes Lions and make a note of what inspires you.

Be curious: Keep your finger on the pulse. Follow topics and trends that interest different sections of the population – whether that's religion, sports fandom, *Love Island* or observing what's happening on the 'other' side of the political spectrum.

Reach out: Look up internships and placements at agencies like Ogilvy, Bartle Bogle Hegarty (BBH), and adam&eveDDB and reach out to people on LinkedIn to ask if they have time for a chat.

**Position**

Strategist, Ogilvy UK.

Background

BA Modern Languages (German Language and Literature), New College, 2020.