

Enquiries and Appeals

The NCTJ's enquiries and appeals procedures cover all areas relating to its awarding body functions including results, awards, approvals, and malpractice penalties. There are enquiries on results services and appeals procedures that may be followed.

Fees are applicable for both services, but will be refunded where enquiries or appeals are successful.

Enquiries on results service

The information and procedures for Enquiries about Results is based upon that established by the Joint Council for General Qualifications.

Every effort has been made to ensure that the procedures work effectively for candidates, centres and employers.

There is a charge made for this service. Current fees can be found on the NCTJ website at www.nctj.com

Procedures

- Enquiries may be made by candidates, employers or centres on behalf of candidates.
- All enquiries about results or about the conduct of examinations must be made in writing to the Head of Examinations within two weeks of the receipt of the results for the exam (*candidates, centres and employers are advised that they should submit enquiries as soon as possible after the results have been issued. Requests received after the time allowed may not be accepted*).
- All applications for enquiries about results will be acknowledged within 7 working days of receipt. If you have not received an acknowledgement within this period you should inform the NCTJ head office immediately.
- The NCTJ will not consider any telephone requests for enquiries about results.
- Where a final mark is amended for enquiries about the results of individual candidates fees will be refunded, or no charge made.
- Candidates may enquire about the marks awarded for distance learning modules and should follow the same procedures as set out above.

Enquiries about the result for an individual candidate

1. Individual candidates are advised to request an exam report which provides a summary of their examination performance. This will be issued within **two weeks** of a written application. This report provides a general guide to strengths and weakness in each examination component. Application forms may be downloaded from the NCTJ website at www.nctj.com

2. This information may be used to help candidates to understand how the final mark was arrived at. Where candidates have questions about the final mark the first step should be to discuss the report with their tutor or the NCTJ. In many cases this will resolve any queries and help them to understand how and why they were awarded a particular percentage mark and grade.
3. Where questions remain the candidate, employer or centre may initiate an individual enquiry about results by applying to the NCTJ head of examinations within two weeks of receipt of the exam report.

Enquiries about the results for a group of candidates or an examination session.

If on receipt of the results for a group of candidates or an examination session, a centre wishes to enquire about the results, the head of journalism must apply in writing to the NCTJ head of examinations within two weeks of receipt of the results.

General Information

Three levels of enquiries on results are available:

1. Clerical re-check

A full clerical re-check. This will be completed within five working days after acknowledgement of the enquiry. This will consist of the following:

- A. a re-check that all examination components and assessment categories have been marked;
- B. a re-check that the marks have been properly transferred from the examiner marks sheet(s) to the examinations database;
- C. a re-check that any examiner or moderation adjustments, if applicable, have been correctly applied;
- D. a re-check on the grade boundaries.

2. Review and re-mark

A review of the mark records and a re-mark of the examination for individual candidates by an independent examiner and a full clerical re-check and statement of marks by component and assessment category. This will be completed within 10 working days of the enquiry. This will consist of the following:

- A. a clerical re-check consisting of items 1. A to D inclusive above;
- B. a review of the examiner's marks sheet(s) and the original marks awarded for each examination component undertaken against the approved mark scheme for the examination, by a senior, independent examiner who will confirm or amend the original marks.

3. Review and moderation

A review and moderation of all the mark records for a group of candidates or a single examination session, by an independent senior moderator together with a full clerical re-check and statement of marks by component and assessment category. This will be completed within 15 working days of the enquiry and consists of:

- A. a complete review, including clerical checks, by a senior moderator and an independent expert, of all stages in the examination process prior to the issue of the final results for a group of candidates or examination session;
- B. a written report from the original examiner;
- C. the provision to the centre of a report by the senior moderator on the results of the review;
- D. the provision of the moderated final marks.

Different levels of enquiry may be requested for different candidates' results in a session and for the same or different enquiries for the same candidate in more than one subject area.

In cases where a clerical check, review, re-mark or moderation reveals inaccurate marking or a clerical error, marks for examination components may be confirmed, lowered or raised. Centres must advise candidates of these possible outcomes. It is the responsibility of the head of journalism to ensure that all candidates involved in enquiries about results are aware of and accept the possible outcomes of an enquiry.

When a review and moderation has been requested no request for a clerical check, review or re-mark of the examination results for an individual candidate entered for that session will be accepted.

Outcome of Enquiries about Results

The NCTJ will provide written notification to the centre, candidate or employer of the outcome of the enquiry within the timescales described above.

As a consequence of a change in the final mark the NCTJ will:

- (a) notify the candidate, centre or employer in writing;
- (b) refund, or make no charge for, the candidate enquiry fee where a grade is raised or, in the case of the review and moderation service, refund either the total fee or a proportion of it as appropriate to the circumstances;
- (c) issue a revised statement of results and/or issue a revised certificate where necessary, when the original certificate has been returned.

If the outcome of an enquiry is considered by the NCTJ to bring into question the accuracy of the results for other candidates in that or other sessions, the outcome of the original enquiry will be notified to the centre and the NCTJ Journalism Qualifications Board will extend the enquiry to include any other candidates who may have been affected. This is to protect the interests of all candidates, the integrity of the qualifications and the integrity of the National Qualifications Framework. Centre(s) will be notified in writing of the further investigation and the outcome within four weeks of the outcome of the original enquiry.

Appeals to the NCTJ Journalism Qualifications Board against the outcome of enquiries about results

After the outcome of an enquiry about results has been reported, candidates, centres and employers may appeal against the decision.

Appeals on behalf of an individual candidate or a group of candidates can only be made by the head of journalism responsible for the entry.

All appeals must be made in writing to the head of examinations within two weeks of the date on which notification of the final outcome of the enquiry upon results is received. Requests will be acknowledged in writing within five working days.

Appeals Procedures

The completion of this appeals stage represents the final point in the internal consideration of appeals against decisions of the NCTJ in respect of the conduct of its examinations and other decisions made in its awarding body capacity i.e. approval decisions, malpractice penalty decisions.

The appeal stage will establish whether or not the NCTJ has used procedures that were fit for the purpose and whether it applied them properly and fairly.

The final stage of the appeals process (stage two) allows for a formal hearing of issues raised by candidates, centres or employers in cases where they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the enquiry on results.

The procedures open to investigation include the full range of processes involved in and leading to the award of a final mark and the result obtained in an NCTJ examination, including marking, standardisation, moderation and any subsequent enquiries upon results.

The procedures apply to appeals against penalties arising from malpractice decisions. The following individuals have a right to appeal against decisions made by the NCTJ:

- Heads of centre who may appeal against sanctions imposed on the centre, as well as on behalf of candidates entered or registered through the centre.
- Members of centre staff, or examining personnel contracted to a centre, who may appeal against sanctions imposed on them personally
- Private candidates
- Third parties who have been barred from examinations

The procedures followed are in line with those used by other awarding bodies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Fees

There is a charge made for stage two of this service. Current fees can be found on the NCTJ website at www.nctj.com

Where an appeal is upheld a full refund will be made to the candidate, centre or employer.

Stage One

Formal notification of the intention to appeal should include the following information:

- (a) Name(s) and Unique Reference Number(s) of candidate(s);
- (b) Examination title;
- (c) Date of examination;
- (d) Simple statement of the reason(s) for making the appeal; and
- (e) Full description of the reason for appeal.

Where a centre considers that a common issue applies to a number of candidates from the centre, a joint application for those candidates should be made.

A review of the case by a member of the Journalism Qualifications Board who has had no previous involvement will be made. The outcome of the review will be reported in writing to the candidate, centre, or employer within four weeks of receipt of the appeal request.

The review may confirm the decision or may require the Journalism Qualifications Board (including the examining team) to take appropriate remedial action instructing the NCTJ to review its internal processes to improve its quality assurance procedures.

There is no fee at this stage of the appeals process.

Stage Two

If the candidate, centre or employer remains dissatisfied, written request to proceed to stage two should be made within 10 working days to the Head of examinations. There is a fee for stage two, see fees list at www.nctj.com. At this time they should indicate the names of those who will represent the centre or employer and candidate(s) and provide such information and evidence as an appeals committee may require. At the same time, relevant officers of the committee (including members of examining teams, if appropriate) will be asked to provide documents in support of their view.

Stage two involves the hearing of the case by a specially convened Appeals Committee of the Journalism Qualifications Board and at least one person independent of the Journalism Qualifications Board. This person will not be, and has not been at any time during the past seven years, a member of the NCTJ's board or committees, or an employee or an examiner of the NCTJ. The appeal will be considered at a formal hearing during which the issues will be fully reviewed and considered.

The candidate, centre or employer will be asked to provide not more than two representatives whose role will be to set out the basis of the appeal on behalf of the candidate(s) and not more than two witnesses to give supporting statements or other evidence in relation to the case being made. The Journalism Qualifications Board will also be asked to nominate not more than two officers to present its views and may also nominate up to two witnesses.

An appeal hearing will take place within four weeks of a formal written request.

At the Hearing

The hearing will be conducted by an appointed member of the Journalism Qualifications Board, who will be a member of the appeals committee panel and will have a casting vote.

The appointed member will rule on any matters of relevance or procedure during the hearing. The case on behalf of the appellant(s) will be presented by the centre, employer or candidate (or his/her nominee) and on behalf of the Journalism Qualifications Board by a nominated officer.

The order of business will normally proceed as follows:

- (1) The centre, employer or candidate shall set out their case in the presence of the Journalism Qualifications Board representatives and witnesses, calling upon the notified witnesses as appropriate.
- (2) Journalism Qualifications Board representatives shall have the opportunity through the chair of the appeals committee to ask questions of the appellants(s) and witnesses.
- (3) The members of the appeals committee shall have the opportunity to ask questions of the appellant(s) and witnesses.
- (4) The Journalism Qualifications Board representatives shall set out their case in the presence of the appellant(s) and witnesses and may call upon notified witnesses on their behalf.
- (5) The appellant shall have the opportunity, through the chair of the appeals committee, to ask questions of the Journalism Qualifications Board representatives and witnesses.
- (6) The appeals committee members shall have the opportunity to ask questions of the Journalism Qualifications Board representatives and witnesses.
- (7) The Journalism Qualifications Board representatives shall have the opportunity to sum up their case.
- (8) The appellant shall have the opportunity to sum up her/his case.

(9) All representatives and witnesses shall withdraw and the appeals committee will deliberate in private. In the event that the appeals committee members require clarification on any matter, all parties will return to allow relevant points to be addressed.

(10) A record of the proceedings will be made by the Head of examinations.

The members of the appeals committee will come to a decision, taking a vote if necessary. The Head of examinations shall note the decision and the reasons given. The appeals committee will either refuse the appeal (thus confirming the original decision) or uphold it and require the board (including the examining team) to take appropriate action. If the appeal is upheld, the appeals fee will be refunded. When appropriate, the panel may make broader recommendations to the Journalism Qualifications Board as a whole.

After the Hearing

The decision of the appeals committee and the underlying reasons will be conveyed to both parties within five working days of the hearing and reported to the Journalism Qualifications Board at its next meeting. A further appeal may be heard by means of an independent review conducted by the chairperson of the NCTJ's Quality Assurance and Standards Committee if necessary.