



## **ACCREDITATION STANDARD AND INFORMATION PACK 2016-17**

**Working in partnership with you  
to train and develop  
the journalists of tomorrow**

***National Council for the Training of Journalists***

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## WHAT WE DO

The National Council for the Training of Journalists accredits more than 80 journalism courses at 40 universities, colleges and independent training centres across the UK.

The courses are delivered to post A-level, undergraduate students, postgraduate students and trainees already working in journalism on a full-time, part-time and day release basis, over periods ranging from four months to four years.

Students on these courses study for the NCTJ Diploma in Journalism, which includes four mandatory modules: essential journalism (reporting and storytelling); essential journalism e-portfolio (original work to show future employers); essential journalism ethics and regulation (standards in journalism); and essential media law and regulation (legally safe journalism). They must also complete enough elective modules to bring their total number of credits earned to 82. For 2016/17 the options include shorthand; broadcast journalism; sports journalism; PR and communications; production journalism and videojournalism for online. Knowledge in all the Diploma subjects is assessed by exams set by the NCTJ that offer five graded levels of achievement:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Marks</u>
A	70% +
B	60 - 69%
C	50 - 59%
D	40 - 49%
E	30 - 39%
F (fail)	0 - 29%

Candidates who earn their Diploma in Journalism need to achieve A to C grade passes in all the mandatory exams, plus – where applicable – a shorthand speed of 100wpm in order to become eligible to progress to sit the NCTJ's final qualification, the National Qualification in Journalism (NQJ). This is usually taken after 18 months' employment as a trainee and is deemed by most editors to be the best proof that trainees are ready to qualify as senior journalists. While students are offered NCTJ exams at lower shorthand speeds (60 to 90wpm), they should be aware that these may not be acceptable to prospective employers.

For more information on the NCTJ, please visit our website at [www.nctj.com](http://www.nctj.com).

## NCTJ AND THE INDUSTRY

Journalism is changing – and so are journalists.

News is all around us, reaching more people more quickly than ever before. The opportunities created by online publishing and social media have revolutionised the way news is gathered and disseminated. Newspaper and magazine publishers and broadcasters are facing challenges to their dominance from agile new companies able to take full advantage of the technological advances. Modern journalists are learning new techniques and adapting traditional skills to find ways to tell stories using text, still photographs, sophisticated graphics, audio and moving images. Where once clear differences existed between newspaper journalists, magazine journalists and broadcasters, today's journalist is expected to work across several platforms.

Amid all this change, acquiring the core skills of good journalism remains vital. Without the ability to spot a story and compile a fair, accurate and balanced report, no one can prosper in what is now largely a graduate profession, albeit one where a degree alone is unlikely to be enough to gain entry.

That's where the NCTJ fits in.

### What they say about the NCTJ

***"We are the biggest employer of trainee journalists in the provincial press. We recruit mainly from those who have taken an NCTJ course."*** – John Wilson, editorial learning & development manager, Johnston Press

***"Reporting is a simple craft requiring certain basics: curiosity, cheek and never, ever giving up. Whenever I'm asked by teenagers about how they can get into journalism I tell them to head for the nearest town or city which has an NCTJ course."*** – Margareta Pagano, business columnist, Independent & former NCTJ trainee

***"The course was time well spent in every sense of the word. It is excellent preparation for the industry and worth three times as much as on-the-job experience."*** – John Pienaar, chief political correspondent, BBC Radio 5 Live & former NCTJ trainee

***"What an NCTJ course gives aspiring journalists is a solid foundation for a reporting career, the basics of the job, whether they end up in newspapers, radio or television."*** – Mark Austin, co-presenter, ITV News at Ten & former NCTJ trainee

***"I'm most proud of getting my 100 words per minute shorthand – the toughest exam I've ever done."*** – Andrew Porter, director, Brunswick Group, former political editor, Daily Telegraph & former NCTJ trainee

***"The teaching on the MA was brilliant, completely changed the way I wrote and showed me how to look for the real story when a person is talking. My studies easily saw me through my NCTJ exams and I wouldn't have got my job without those."*** – Katharine Barney, city hall reporter, London Evening Standard & former NCTJ trainee

***"I am passionate about the importance of training and still rely on much of what I learned back then, especially the basic principles of constructing a good story."*** – Lindsay Nicholson, editorial director, Good Housekeeping & former NCTJ trainee

Through our examinations and the courses we accredit, we help equip would-be journalists to find their first job by providing them with the basic vocational skills that editors want. How do we know what they want? We consult leaders in all sectors of the industry regularly, and many editors play active roles in designing and revising our syllabuses and exams.

That's why NCTJ qualifications are the most common in the UK journalism industry. That's why major media groups and other journalist employers, including many broadcasters, say they prefer NCTJ-qualified applicants.

That's why hundreds of students sit our exams every year, and why many successful journalists in all media – including people like Mark Austin, Kay Burley, Jeremy Clarkson, Alex Crawford, Geordie Greig, John Humphrys, Piers Morgan, Nick Owen, Helen Skelton and Alice Woolley – are thankful for their NCTJ qualification.

## From NCTJ training into work

*Source: Destinations of NCTJ Diploma in Journalism Students, 2015  
Independent survey by BMG Research  
commissioned by the NCTJ*

The research is based on a survey of 205 individuals who had completed their course of study for the NCTJ Diploma between six and 10 months previously. The research approach was based on that used by the UK's Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA), which conducts regular destination surveys of graduates from the UK's HE institutes.

The survey found 82% of former Diploma students working, with 6% studying, 9% unemployed and 3% doing other things. The higher the level of attainment of the NCTJ Diploma, the more likely it is that the individual will be in employment – 96 per cent of those who attained the gold standard were in a job, compared to 90 per cent of those who attained the Diploma standard and 72 per cent of those who did not complete their diploma.

Of those who were working, the great majority were working in journalism-related jobs. For those who attained a gold standard Diploma pass, the figures were higher still:

Gold standard pass and working in journalism	86%
Diploma pass and working in journalism	76%
Did not complete Diploma and working in journalism	75%
All respondents now working in journalism	79%

Base: 180

Asked about the role of the NCTJ qualification in securing their job, most former students said the Diploma was either a formal requirement or had given them an edge:

	All	Those in journalism jobs
Formal employer requirement	39	37
Not requirement, but gave advantage	22	40
Not required	32	24

Base: 180/142

Asked how well the Diploma prepared them for work, almost all of the gold standard respondents said either "well" or "very well":

	All	Gold standard students
Very well	27	39
Well	50	57
Not very well	12	4
Not at all	12	0

Base: 189

# ACCREDITATION OF JOURNALISM COURSES

NCTJ accreditation is *the* hallmark of excellence in journalism training, providing a world-class standard that is recognised and sought after throughout the media industry.

Achieving our accreditation will make your course more appealing to students looking for a career in journalism, and make your students more appealing to employers looking for multi-skilled recruits who know the fundamentals of journalism and can operate effectively in a busy newsroom.

But if these benefits are to mean anything, we need to be sure that students and employers are not short-changed, and that an NCTJ-accredited course does exactly what it says on the tin by delivering vocational training to a high standard that is understood and valued by everyone who cares about the quality of journalism.

So what are we looking for in an accredited journalism course? The NCTJ believes that overall programme structure and methods of teaching should be left to experts at the universities, colleges and independent training centres who deliver courses. Our role is to:

- Satisfy ourselves that the NCTJ syllabus is delivered effectively and in full with an appropriate balance between academic and vocational modules so that students leave the course able to practise journalism as well as being able to analyse and reflect on it
- Encourage the provision of courses where students learn to meet the demands of 21<sup>st</sup> century newsrooms – with their emphasis on skills convergence, mobile journalism and publishing across a range of platforms
- Insist that students learn to operate to the regulatory and ethical standards expected in all sectors of the industry and in wider society
- Work in partnership with course providers to maintain and update an accreditation system that is both focused on quality, “real world” journalism skills and flexible enough to accommodate innovative approaches to learning.

As an awarding body, recognised by the Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator (Ofqual), we set high standards. But that doesn't mean we're asking course providers to jump through unnecessary hoops to win our endorsement. We believe working towards accreditation should be a worthwhile, meaningful exercise based on collaboration and practical support.

To help speed up the application process and iron out any potential problems at your centre, we recommend at least one pre-accreditation advisory visit. We are always available to discuss any queries you may have over the phone or by email, and you can keep abreast of the latest developments via our website and our eJournalism newsletter.

We are confident that the majority of centres offering NCTJ-accredited courses will agree that our accreditation process, while challenging, is fair, reasonable and professional. To ensure that it stays that way and that we validate our licence to operate, the NCTJ is committed to a programme of continuous improvement based on regular discussions with all our partners – course leaders, students and editors. We welcome your ideas and feedback.

As the media world continues to change, so too does the NCTJ. We've already introduced substantial improvements covering all aspects of the organisation, including accreditation. Many of these changes are challenging and will require new ways of thinking and working – but every move we've made, and will make in the future, has just one purpose: to maintain the highest standards of journalism. As part of our commitment to working with the industry to make journalism a more diverse profession, we encourage all centres which offer accredited courses to open up recruitment to candidates from the widest possible range of backgrounds.

We look forward to receiving your completed accreditation application and to working with you in the future.

## ACCREDITATION OF JOURNALISM COURSES

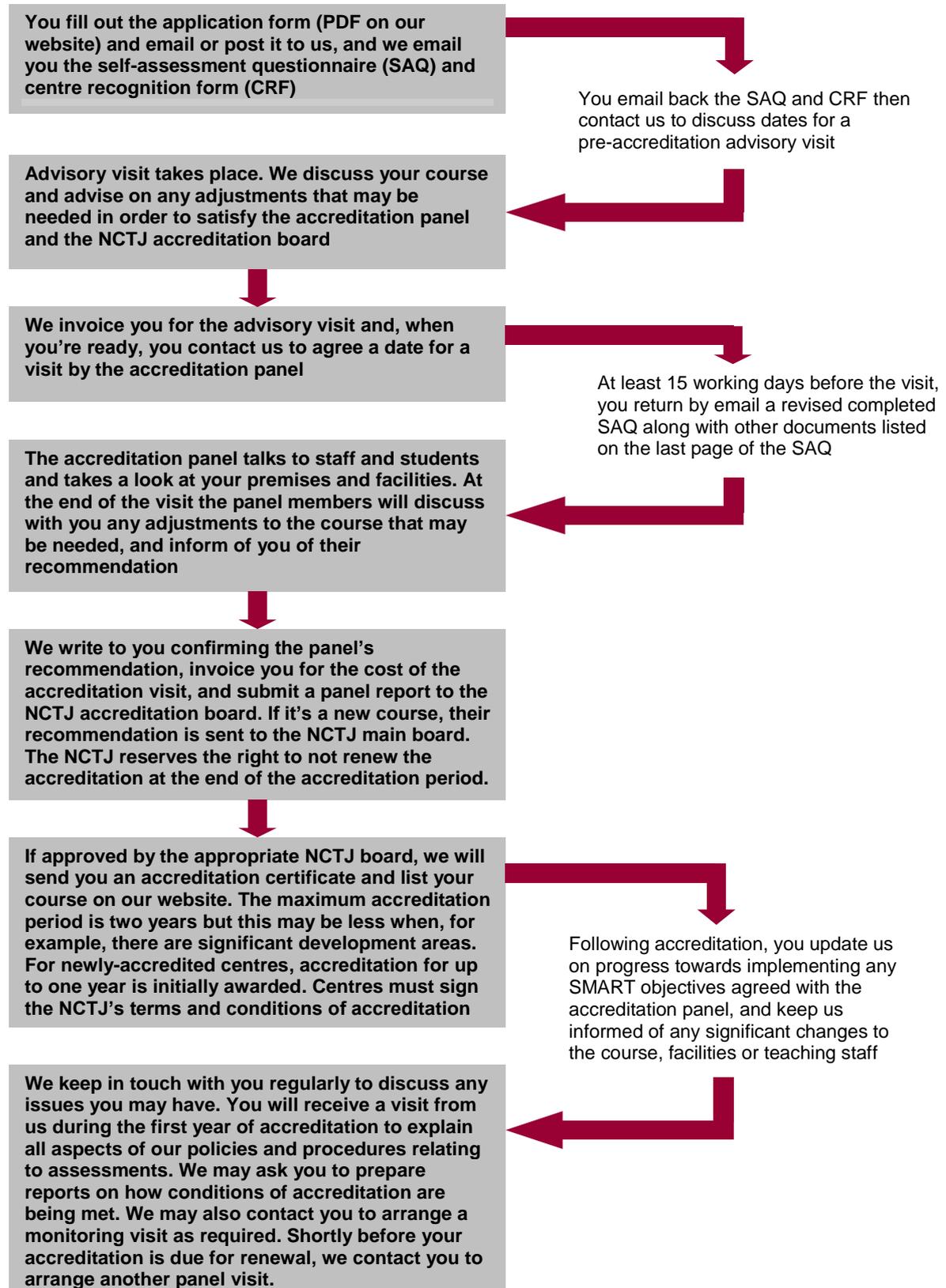
### THE INDUSTRY STANDARD

PRINCIPLES	AIMS	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
<p><b>Recruitment</b></p> <p>The NCTJ is committed to accrediting courses where there is effective recruitment and selection of students who will readily find jobs and be able to maintain the high standards of UK journalism in the future</p>	<p><b>1.</b> To accredit courses that are promoted clearly and compellingly to students seeking a vocational qualification that is widely recognised and highly valued by journalism employers</p>	<p>♦1. Promotional materials and/or course literature explain the purpose, scope and distinctive nature of NCTJ qualifications, with particular emphasis on the importance of learning shorthand, and the exacting standards required to pass the preliminary examinations in journalism</p>
	<p><b>2.</b> To accredit courses where students are selected on the basis of ability and the potential to succeed in a career in journalism</p>	<p>♦1. Students are selected on the basis of an interview and the NCTJ's entrance test (or a similar test devised by the course provider and endorsed by the NCTJ) that assess the traditional qualities demanded of journalists or.... ♦Where interviews and entrance tests are not feasible, the centre can provide evidence of a robust selection process which uses personal statements and other available information (eg open day attendance, work experience, school journalism) to identify applicants who possess the personal qualities required to operate effectively as journalists</p>
	<p><b>3.</b> To accredit courses that are committed to fostering a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment regardless of class, gender, ethnic origin, age, sexual orientation, disability, or particular needs</p>	<p>♦1. There are equal opportunities, health &amp; safety and particular needs policies in place that adhere to current convention and practice</p> <p>♦2. There are spaces for assessment purposes that provide access for all candidates.</p>

PRINCIPLES	AIMS	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
<p><b>Teaching &amp; Learning</b></p> <p>The NCTJ is committed to accrediting courses that deliver journalism teaching and learning opportunities of the highest standard and based on industry requirements</p>	<p><b>4.</b> To accredit courses where the NCTJ syllabus is delivered effectively and in full by knowledgeable and experienced teaching staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦1. Schemes of work reflecting the requirements of the NCTJ syllabus</li> <li>♦2. The course aims for at least 50% A-C grade pass rate in all NCTJ exams and 50% 100wpm or more shorthand. The course meets the eligibility performance benchmark of at least a 50% A-E grade pass rate in all NCTJ exams plus at least a 50% pass rate at a minimum of 60wpm for shorthand. The 50% threshold is to be based on the total number of students graduating from the accredited course</li> <li>♦3. Staff CVs demonstrating recent (ie since last panel visit) newsroom and/or relevant subject experience</li> <li>♦4. NCTJ self-assessment questionnaire; external examiner(s)' reports; most recent internal quality assurance self-assessment report</li> </ul>
	<p><b>5.</b> To accredit courses where there is an integrated approach to teaching with formal classroom tuition linked to practical journalism that reflects developments in media convergence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦1. Course newspapers, magazines web pages etc., and/or marked exercise copy demonstrating students' knowledge of news writing, media law &amp; public affairs</li> <li>♦2. Schemes of work, e.g., newdays or work placements, that show every student practises 'real world' journalism operating within tight deadlines and adhering to professional codes and standards</li> <li>♦3. There are court and council visits and these are linked to the production of news material</li> <li>♦4. Newsroom, newsgathering and editing facilities and equipment are available across platforms, and a range of newspapers and magazines is available in print, broadcast and online formats</li> </ul>
	<p><b>6.</b> To accredit courses where the teaching of ethics and regulation is integrated into the practical journalism programmes of study</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦1. Students are required to gain work experience. There is sufficient time allowed for this and they are encouraged to report back to their fellow students on any practical ethical issues they have encountered during work placements</li> <li>♦2. A broad range of guest speakers made up of those who work as journalists and who interact regularly with journalists, including speakers reflecting on ethical dilemmas they have faced during their careers</li> </ul>

PRINCIPLES	AIMS	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
<p><b>Control &amp; Evaluation</b></p> <p>The NCTJ is committed to accrediting courses that apply effective control and evaluation systems</p>	<p><b>7.</b> To accredit courses whose providers are dedicated to a culture of continuous improvement based on a well-developed and coherent quality management process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆1. There are effective quality assurance procedures to deal with complaints and to monitor and act on student attendance, achievement and progression</li> <li>◆2. Information is available on students' first job destinations both journalism-related and other areas.</li> <li>◆3. Students have access to transparent information on fees and available bursaries, including the JDF</li> <li>◆4. There is positive feedback from students past and present and editors on the way the course is managed and delivered</li> <li>◆5. A student representative is elected who is required to attend NCTJ student council meetings</li> </ul>
<p><b>Administration</b></p> <p>The NCTJ is committed to accrediting courses where staff meet the administrative requirements associated with the delivery of professional qualifications</p>	<p><b>8.</b> To accredit courses where staff are able to carry out the required administrative and examination functions in a timely and professional manner</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆1. Examination papers are marked accurately and consistently to the NCTJ's marking guidelines</li> <li>◆2. Examination sessions are conducted and invigilated in accordance with conventional practice</li> <li>◆3. Students are registered promptly for examinations; NCTJ exam fees are collected and paid on time; and examination results are distributed to students as soon as they are available</li> <li>◆4. Teaching staff attend NCTJ marking workshops and exam board seminars on a regular basis</li> <li>◆ 5. Course leaders and/or heads of journalism make every effort to attend the various annual forums held by the NCTJ to discuss and receive feedback on qualification and accreditation issues at least every two years</li> </ul>

# THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS



# WHAT WE NEED FROM YOU FOR ACCREDITATION

Once we have met you on an advisory visit to discuss your course plans and you feel that you are ready, we will agree a date for a visit by our accreditation panel. The panel will include at least one NCTJ representative and normally two to three editors or senior journalists.

At least 21 working days before the visit we would like you to send us by email documentary evidence to show that your course is ready for accreditation. We don't need reams of paper, just clear evidence that you are implementing the NCTJ's industry standard for journalism courses. While courses applying for accreditation for the first time will not be able to produce all the evidence, generally we will expect your application documentation to include:

- Self-assessment questionnaire (SAQ). This is a standard requirement for all courses seeking to gain or retain accreditation. Information in the SAQ helps the panel members assess the extent to which the course is able to meet the terms of the NCTJ's accreditation standard. First-time applicants will not be able to complete all sections of the questionnaire, but please provide as much information as possible. The SAQ must be completed on-screen and returned to the NCTJ as an email attachment.
- A centre recognition form (to be sent to you by the NCTJ)
- Student/course handbook
- NCTJ module descriptors/schemes of work
- Student timetable
- Centre's own entrance test (if applicable)
- Examples of promotional materials and/or course literature which indicate that the purpose, scope, cost and distinctive nature of NCTJ qualifications have been explained clearly to those enquiring about the course and to those who have joined it
- CVs (in summary form) of tutors who will be delivering NCTJ modules
- Names and first job destinations of recently graduating students
- The most recent external examiner's report (if applicable)
- A timetable for the panel visit (unless otherwise agreed with the NCTJ, please assume panel visits will start at 11am and finish by 3pm with the centre providing a half-hour sandwich lunch for panel members and key course staff. Note: The NCTJ cannot accept any other hospitality.)

- A centre location map, travel directions by car and train, and car parking details

The NCTJ needs to receive these documents by email at least 21 working days in advance of the panel visit.

## **Accreditation panel visit**

The accreditation panel's visit will last for four hours and normally starts at 11am with panel members meeting briefly in private to discuss arrangements for the day, and the results of the head of accreditation's desk research. Please arrange a half-hour sandwich lunch for the panel members and key course staff. During their visit, the panel members will want to:

- Meet with the head of journalism and course leader, and member of the centre's senior management, to discuss accreditation documents, NCTJ exam take-up and performance and other issues. Other key staff, including tutors for various subjects, should be available to answer the panel's questions if required
- Meet in private with as many students as possible

Please have on hand the following, should panellists want to examine them:

- A representative range of materials (course newspapers or magazines, news web pages, online video packages) produced by current and/or immediately previous cohorts of students
- Samples of marked journalism exercise copy

## **Accreditation period**

Centres working towards accreditation for the first time can apply for approval as an NCTJ exam centre for a period of up to three years. Centres must complete an advisory visit and provide annual evidence that progress with accreditation is being made. The NCTJ always takes action if centres make false or misleading claims about accreditation in order to ensure that no potential applicants are being misled.

Accreditation is granted for a maximum of two years. In some instances the panel may recommend accreditation for a shorter period subject to certain conditions being met within a specified time. New courses, for example, can expect to be granted accreditation for up to one year, until results for some or all NCTJ exams have been assessed. Similarly courses where certain elements require attention or adjustment will be offered accreditation strictly on condition that remedial action is taken within the time specified by the panel. We will contact you in advance to remind you that re-accreditation is due so that you have time to gather the documentation we will need before another panel visit.

Monitoring visits may be requested, carried out and charged for at any time during the accreditation period with four weeks' notice. The purpose of a monitoring visit is to check progress with any development issues and/or conditions of accreditation, that examination guidelines are being adhered to, and to discuss any other issues that may require attention.

## **Removal of accreditation**

Accreditation is removed where performance falls seriously short of the required standard. If the centre fails to meet its obligations included in the accreditation agreement, which is signed upon commencement of accreditation, the NCTJ reserves the right not to renew accreditation at the end of the accreditation term, or temporarily remove the NCTJ accreditation at any time. Should accreditation be temporarily removed, the NCTJ shall at its discretion impose a series of SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed) objectives to help the centre meet the NCTJ standard.

If the centre cannot remedy its default within 45 days of the removal of accreditation, the NCTJ reserves the right to remove NCTJ accreditation. The NCTJ's decision is final and there is no appeal. When providers decline to co-operate with the NCTJ, accreditation will be removed in a way that allows students already on course to complete their NCTJ qualifications. Centres can reapply for accreditation.

The NCTJ shall not be liable for any costs or losses sustained or incurred by the centre arising directly or indirectly from the removal of the NCTJ accreditation, and the centre shall reimburse the NCTJ on written demand for any costs or losses sustained or incurred by the NCTJ arising directly or indirectly from the centre default.

If the centre claims due process has not been followed the complaints procedure can be instigated.

Academic centres should note that the NCTJ no longer accredits pathways within journalism degree courses where only those students who elect to join an "NCTJ pathway" enter NCTJ exams. Only whole courses leading to a named and specific award can be considered for accreditation.

## **Exams outcomes and results tables**

Accreditation is awarded to those providers who meet (and continue to meet) the Industry Standard for journalism courses – a key performance indicator being at least a 50 per cent (based on the number of graduating students) A-E grade pass rate in each core NCTJ exam plus (where applicable) and at least a 50 per cent pass rate at a minimum shorthand speed of 60wpm.

The NCTJ believes that all students on any course it accredits should enter and pass our professional exams in addition to any assessments required by the course provider. It is these exams that distinguish NCTJ-accredited journalism courses from the many others on offer, and the Diploma in Journalism is what the overwhelming majority of employers want their trainees to possess.

Accreditation will not be appropriate for those courses that seek to use our kite mark solely for marketing purposes but which lack sufficiently robust recruitment criteria, motivation and support to ensure adequate take-up of the NCTJ's professional exams.

Just as we believe that course providers should be able to make a fully informed choice about whether to seek accreditation, so we believe students are entitled to make an informed choice about which course is right for them.

To that end the NCTJ publishes annually on its website results tables showing the take-up and exam pass rates for every accredited journalism course.

## **Administration responsibilities**

Accredited journalism course providers work in partnership with the NCTJ and that means sharing administrative responsibilities. If you are granted accreditation you will be expected to:

- Meet the deadlines for registering your students to sit NCTJ exams and ordering portfolios on their behalf; collect and pay exam fees to the NCTJ (refer to the fees list on the website for costs)
- Provide appropriate invigilators and facilities for your students to sit exams on dates set by the NCTJ
- Mark diploma exams as directed by the NCTJ (including media law) and assess student e-portfolios using our marking criteria and guidelines (the NCTJ pays a fee for each portfolio/exam marked).

- Attend marking workshops and subject seminars organised by the NCTJ
- Distribute exam results to your students
- Liaise regularly with the NCTJ exams team
- Ensure prompt payment of all NCTJ invoices

## **NCTJ accreditation service**

The NCTJ regards its relationship with centres as a partnership and strives to provide a professional and beneficial accreditation service. The NCTJ will:

- Provide the centre with reasonable support in relation to the NCTJ accreditation process
- Endeavour not to impose necessary or unduly burdensome requirements when arranging visits
- Strive to ensure that all information supplied to a centre is provided in good faith and is accurate in all material respects
- Market and promote the accredited courses and provide other reasonable benefits
- Grant the centre permission to use NCTJ copyright materials for the purposes of training and education
- Where appropriate ensure that the centre's potential students are considered for the NCTJ's Journalism Diversity Fund bursaries
- Designate the centre as an NCTJ-approved exam centre

Centres will be encouraged to participate in forums, workshops and the annual Journalism Skills Conference to discuss issues and share practice.

## **Accreditation fees**

Our accreditation fees for 2016/17 are as follows, and include 20% VAT:

- **Annual membership** - £870
- **Accreditation panel visit** - £594
- **Advisory or monitoring visit** - £468
- **New centre accreditation** - £870