

**National Council for the  
Training of Journalists**

**NCTJ Level 3  
Certificate in Foundation Journalism  
Qualification Specification**

Qualification No. 601/1782/5

NCTJ Training Ltd  
The New Granary  
Station Road  
Newport  
Saffron Walden  
Essex  
CB11 3PL

### **1. Rationale**

The Certificate in Foundation Journalism is a qualification that has been developed to broaden the potential routes into journalism as a career. It will provide training for community journalists and writers and those with an interest in journalism who wish to gain a professional qualification.

### **2. Aims and objectives**

A qualification to provide a stepping stone for those aged 16-18 into journalism; provide learning and training for those wishing to use journalistic skills in a community, non-professional setting. Learners can choose the specific units they wish or need to study and receive an Award certificate for those individual units.

### **3. Progression**

The qualification will prepare learners for further learning or training and may provide progression to the industry standard NCTJ level 3 Diploma in Journalism.

### **4. Target groups and entry details**

This syllabus provides opportunities for learners aged 16-18 and 19+. NCTJ entry requirements are intended to ensure that there are no barriers to restrict access and progression and equal opportunities exist for all learners. Learners with Particular Educational Needs are not targeted separately although special provision may be made for them.

### **5. Total qualification time**

Total qualification time (TQT) aims to provide learners with an indication of the minimum length of time it would take an average learner to complete this qualification.

TQT is made up of two components:

- 1) Guided learning: activities completed by the learner under the direct instruction or supervision of a tutor, trainer or other appropriate provider of education or training.
- 2) All other hours spent in preparation, study or training, including assessment time, but not under the direct supervision of a tutor, trainer or other appropriate training provider.

This syllabus incorporates a programme of study that includes an estimated 80 hours *guided learning (the estimated minimum time an average learner may expect to spend under direct instruction or supervision of a tutor or trainer)*.

A learner can also reasonably expect to spend an estimated 50 hours in preparation, study or any other form of participation in education or training, including assessment, which takes place as directed by a tutor, trainer or other appropriate training provider.

### **TQT**

The total qualification time an average learner can expect to take to complete the qualification is 130 hours.

Coursework will be set and marked by approved centre tutors. The coursework will incorporate practical tasks based in the classroom and/or in the real world covering the areas outlined in this syllabus.

### **6. How to gain the qualification**

There are 18 different units. To complete the qualification four units are mandatory including: Gathering information; How to tell a news story; Recording information; and Legal and

ethical considerations for journalists. The other 14 units are optional units. Candidates will gain 7 credits on completion of the four mandatory units and must achieve a minimum of 13 credits overall to gain the qualification. Learners may choose from the optional units what they wish to complete to gain a minimum of 6 credits and complete the full qualification.

Standards on which learners' levels of attainment are differentiated is outlined in the programme of study and described in the pass/fail grade descriptors (item 17). Assessment methods accepted by the NCTJ include:

- Direct observation of learners carrying out the relevant task;
- Inspection and evaluation of work produced (this includes electronic evidence where appropriate);
- Questioning of learners to support performance;
- Simulation where agreed;
- Expert witness where specific expertise is required;
- Oral or written exams/test;
- Presentations where the candidate can show clear understanding of the principles involved;
- Assignments;
- Projects;
- Case studies;
- Other methods by prior agreement with the NCTJ

### **7. Availability of assessments**

Centres and tutors are required to provide learners with information and advice on the programme of study, the level of demand and associated requirements and expectations. Assessment is made on a continuous basis and will vary from centre to centre and learner to learner.

### **8. Duration of assessments**

All assessments are structured so that the duration of each assessment provides opportunities for all learners to demonstrate achievement to the standard required as set out in the programme of study.

### **9. Fair access to assessment**

Information on assessment, examination and entry requirements for learners with particular needs is published in the 'Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy'. A copy of this policy is available from NCTJ Training Ltd, The New Granary, Station Road, Newport, Saffron Walden, Essex CB11 3PL and is also provided on the company's website: [www.nctj.com](http://www.nctj.com)

### **10. Validity of syllabus**

This general syllabus for the NCTJ Level 3 Certificate in Foundation Journalism is valid until August 2018.

### **11. Repeats of assessments**

Where a learner is not able to reach the minimum standard in an assessment, re-submission at that level is permitted.

### **12. Issue of results**

Results will normally be issued within four weeks of the date of completion of the unit. This time is necessary to ensure that results are properly standardised and verified by the NCTJ. Qualification certificates will normally be issued within six weeks of the course end date. Unit certificates will be issued on verification of the results.

### **13. Language and bias**

Every effort has been made to ensure that this syllabus and associated mark schemes, procedures and materials are free from any form of bias, refer to explicit content and have no hidden requirements for entry or assessment.

Care has been taken to ensure that the syllabus, learning outcomes, assessment criteria and standards make appropriate demands on learners both in terms of their physical safety and well being and expectations of physical and cognitive performance in relation to their age and level of ability.

### **14. Confidentiality**

In order to ensure that the NCTJ Certificate in Foundation Journalism reflects an accurate measure of attainment, the NCTJ will take all reasonable steps to ensure that such confidentiality is maintained.

Where any breach of such confidentiality (including through the loss or theft of assessment materials) is either suspected by the NCTJ or alleged by any other person, the NCTJ will investigate that breach.

### **15. Learner registrations**

Each learner that registers with the NCTJ to take the NCTJ Certificate in Foundation Journalism is uniquely identified by a Unique Reference Number (URN) generated by the NCTJ's database of learner records. Centres enrolling learners to take an NCTJ qualification are responsible for confirming the identity of the learner when they are enrolled.

### **16. Qualification content**

To gain the Certificate in Foundation Journalism, the learner must complete four mandatory units: Gathering information; How to tell a news story; Recording information; and Legal and ethical considerations for journalists. The other 14 units are optional units: How to use the English Language for journalism (level 2); Using the English language for maximum effect in journalism (level 2); Writing for digital media; Writing for a specific purpose; Feature writing; How society works; Using video to tell a story; Using audio to tell a story; Taking images suitable for publication; Finding and using data; Sports reporting; Writing reviews and comment articles; the history of news; and Community radio newsgathering.

Learners must achieve a minimum of 13 credits to gain the qualification and may choose which options they prefer to complete.

### **Mandatory units**

<b>1. Gathering information</b>	<b>2 credits level 3</b>	<b>J/507/8573</b>
<b><i>Upon achieving this unit the learner will: (Learning outcomes)</i></b>		
1. Be able to research stories suitable for publication		
2. Be able to research stories ensuring accuracy of information		
3. Be able to identify dangers of internet research		
4. Understand the principles of what makes a good interview		
5. Be able to interview people to gain facts and opinions		
<b><i>Examples of how to achieve the above include: (assessment criteria)</i></b>		
1.1 Identify potential sources of stories and gather information across a range of settings		
2.1 Verify the validity of information obtained from a range of sources		
3.1 Identify the pitfalls and dangers of relying on information gathered from the internet		
4.1 Explain the principles of a good interview to gain facts and opinions		
5.1 Gather information by interviewing face-to-face, by telephone and email		
<b>2. How to tell a news story</b>	<b>1 credit level 3</b>	<b>K/507/8601</b>
<b><i>Upon achieving this unit the learner will: (Learning outcomes)</i></b>		

1. Be able to produce an accurate news story suitable for publication <b>Examples of how to achieve the above include: (assessment criteria)</b>		
1.1 Write an introduction with impact		
1.2 Write a story with structure		
1.3 Use quotes effectively in a story		
1.4 Write accurately and within the law and any codes of conduct that may be applicable		
<b>3. Recording information</b>	<b>1 credit level 3</b>	<b>K/507/8582</b>
<b>Upon achieving this unit the learner will: (Learning outcomes)</b>		
1. Understand the various methods of gathering and recording information		
2. Know the equipment available for recording information		
3 Understand the legal and ethical considerations of using recording equipment for interviews or in other places		
<b>Examples of how to achieve the above include: (assessment criteria)</b>		
1.1 Explain why accurate recording and retention of information gained is important		
1.2 Explain the advantages and weaknesses of the various methods of recording information gained: to include memory, long-hand, recording and shorthand		
2.1 Identify commonly found audio equipment and file formats		
3.1 identify the laws and what codes of conduct say about using recording equipment		
<b>4. Legal and ethical considerations for journalists</b>	<b>3 credits level 3</b>	<b>M/507/8583</b>
<b>Upon achieving this unit the learner will: (Learning outcomes)</b>		
1. Understand what is meant by libel and slander		
2. Understand how the law of copyright works		
3. Be able to know what to do if legal problems arise		
4. Understand the difference between legal regulations and codes of conduct		
5. Understand where legal regulation applies and who the regulator is		
<b>Examples of how to achieve the above include: (assessment criteria)</b>		
1.1 Explain the principles of defamation		
1.2 Explain the difference between libel and slander and how this affects a journalist		
1.3 Describe the circumstances when defamation is likely to be an issue for a journalist		
2.1 Explain principles of copyright in respect of the written word and photographs		
2.2 Describe the circumstances in which copyright is likely to be an issue for a journalist		
3.1 Explain the processes to take if threatened with legal action		
4.1 Describe how journalism is regulated by the law and by regulators		
5.1 Identify the roles and powers of Ofcom, IPSO and the Editors' Code, and the Advertising Standards Authority		

### **Optional units**

<b>5. How to use the English language for journalism</b>	<b>1 credit level 2</b>	<b>M/507/8602</b>
<b>Upon achieving this unit the learner will: (Learning outcomes)</b>		
1. Be able to write English in a clear and direct manner		
2. Be able to use correct spelling, punctuation and grammar when writing English		
3. Be able to communicate in a clear, direct and grammatical manner		
<b>Examples of how to achieve the above include: (assessment criteria)</b>		
1.1 Produce written work which can easily be understood by others		
2.1 Produce written work which is grammatically correct, correctly spelt and punctuated		
3.1 Communicate effectively with others so that meanings are clear and understood		
<b>6. Using the English language for maximum effect in journalism</b>	<b>1 credit level 2</b>	<b>T/507/8603</b>
<b>Upon achieving this unit the learner will: (Learning outcomes)</b>		
1. Be able to select the right words and phrases to convey a powerful message		
<b>Examples of how to achieve the above include: (assessment criteria)</b>		
1.1 Produce written work that has impact		
1.2 Produce written work using language which conveys emotions and depth of feeling		
<b>7. Writing for digital media</b>	<b>1 credit level 3</b>	<b>T/507/8584</b>
<b>Upon achieving this unit the learner will: (Learning outcomes)</b>		
1. Be able to write a blog		
2. Be able to write articles for websites		
3. Be able to use social media as a publishing platform		

<b>Examples of how to achieve the above include: (assessment criteria)</b>		
1.1 Organise facts and opinions to write an engaging and effective blog 2.1 Write an article for the web ensuring it has high visibility 3.1 Use at least two social media platforms		
<b>8. Writing for a specific purpose</b>	<b>1 credit level 3</b>	<b>A/507/8604</b>
<b>Upon achieving this unit the learner will: (Learning outcomes)</b>		
1. Be able to write for a newsletter 2. Be able to write a press release		
<b>Examples of how to achieve the above include: (assessment criteria)</b>		
1.1 Produce articles for a newsletter 2.1 Produce a press release		
<b>9. Feature writing</b>	<b>1 credit level 3</b>	<b>A/507/8585</b>
<b>Upon achieving this unit the learner will: (Learning outcomes)</b>		
1. Be able to identify suitable subjects for feature articles 2. Be able to write feature articles for impact and attention		
<b>Examples of how to achieve the above include: (assessment criteria)</b>		
1.1 Describe the characteristics needed for an engaging feature article 2.1 Produce a feature article		
<b>10. How society works</b>	<b>2 credits level 3</b>	<b>F/507/8605</b>
<b>Upon achieving this unit the learner will: (Learning outcomes)</b>		
1. Understand the roles and responsibilities of the government structures supporting society		
<b>Examples of how to achieve the above include: (assessment criteria)</b>		
1.1 Outline the major departments of central government 1.2 Outline the powers and responsibilities of the major departments of state including health, transport, environment and the Home Office 1.3 Explain the structure of local government 1.4 Explain the relationships between the tiers of local government and their relation to central government		
<b>11. Using video to tell a story</b>	<b>2 credits level 3</b>	<b>L/507/8607</b>
<b>Upon achieving this unit the learner will: (Learning outcomes)</b>		
1. Be able to record video, including sound, to a useable standard 2. Be able to edit video footage to tell a story		
<b>Examples of how to achieve the above include: (assessment criteria)</b>		
1.1 Shoot a short video to tell a story 2.1 Use editing software to prepare video footage for publication		
<b>12. Using audio to tell a story</b>	<b>2 credits level 3</b>	<b>R/507/8608</b>
<b>Upon achieving this unit the learner will: (Learning outcomes)</b>		
1. Be able to record audio to a useable standard 2. Be able to edit audio recordings to tell a story		
<b>Examples of how to achieve the above include: (assessment criteria)</b>		
1.1 Make an audio recording to tell a story 2.1 Use audio software to prepare recordings for publication		
<b>13. Taking images suitable for publication</b>	<b>1 unit level 3</b>	<b>F/507/8586</b>
<b>Upon achieving this unit the learner will: (Learning outcomes)</b>		
1. Be able to produce images suitable for publication from a range of settings 2. Understand how to prepare photographs for publication on a range of platforms		
<b>Examples of how to achieve the above include: (assessment criteria)</b>		
1.1 Take head and shoulders photographs 1.2 Compose and take group photographs 1.3 Photograph a news scene 2.1 Prepare an image for print publication 2.2 Prepare an image for publication on a website		
<b>14. Finding and using data</b>	<b>1 credit level 3</b>	<b>L/507/8610</b>
<b>Upon achieving this unit the learner will: (Learning outcomes)</b>		
1. Be able to find data from a range of sources 2. Be able to access data from a range of sources		

3. Be able to interpret data gathered 4. Be able to demonstrate how to use data effectively <b>Examples of how to achieve the above include: (assessment criteria)</b> 1.1 Explain the main sources of data freely available 2.1 Use commonly found programs to gather and manage data 3.1 Accurately interpret data and come to conclusions based on the data 4.1 Prepare accurate stories from data gathered		
<b>15. Sports reporting</b>	<b>2 credits level 3</b>	<b>R/507/8611</b>
<b>Upon achieving this unit the learner will: (Learning outcomes)</b> 1. Understand the rules and competition formats of major UK sports 2. Be able to compile a match or sports event report 3. Understand the dangers of defamation in sports reporting <b>Examples of how to achieve the above include: (assessment criteria)</b> 1.1 Explain the rules and competition of football, cricket, rugby union and rugby league 2.1 Accurately record key moments of action as a sport progresses 2.2 Prepare reports that are accurate, fair and unbiased 2.3 Live blog from a sports event in an accurate, fair and unbiased manner 3.1 Explain the dangers of libel/slander a sports reporter may face		
<b>16. Reviews and comment articles</b>	<b>1 credit level 3</b>	<b>Y/507/8612</b>
<b>Upon achieving this unit the learner will: (Learning outcomes)</b> 1. Be able to review in a fair and accurate manner 2. Be able to comment in a fair and accurate manner <b>Examples of how to achieve the above include: (assessment criteria)</b> 1.1 Prepare effective reviews, distinguishing fact from comment 2.1 Write effective comment articles		
<b>17. The history of news</b>	<b>1 credit level 3</b>	<b>H/507/8614</b>
<b>Upon achieving this unit the learner will: (Learning outcomes)</b> 1. Understand how UK newspapers developed over the centuries 2. Understand how UK news broadcasting has developed 3. Understand how digital news publishing has developed <b>Examples of how to achieve the above include: (assessment criteria)</b> 1.1 Explain the key milestones in the development of UK newspapers 2.1 Explain the key milestones in the development of UK broadcasting 3.1 Explain the key milestones in the development of UK digital publishing		
<b>18. Community news gathering</b>	<b>2 credits level 3</b>	<b>K/507/8615</b>
<b>Upon achieving this unit the learner will: (Learning outcomes)</b> 1. Be able to use community radio broadcasts to build contacts and find news 2. Be able to create a community news bulletin 3. Be able to control a news-based studio discussion 4. Understand how to broadcast live on-air from the studio or remote location 5. Understand the rules under which community radio stations broadcast news <b>Examples of how to achieve the above include: (assessment criteria)</b> 1.1 Explain how to build contacts in a community radio setting 2.1 Explain the principles of putting together a news bulletin 2.2 Assemble a two-minute news bulletin 3.1 Explain the principles of controlling a news-based studio discussion 4.1 Explain the advantages and disadvantages of live reporting 4.2 Explain the pitfalls of live broadcasting 4.3 Explain what to do if things go wrong when live broadcasting 5.1 Explain the Ofcom requirements on community radio stations		

### 17. Grade descriptors

Assessors apply the assessment criteria and follow the NCTJ guidance on assessment of candidates' work. Details of methods of assessment acceptable to the NCTJ can be found on page 3. Assessments carried out for this qualification are at an introductory level of journalism skills. Standards on which learners' levels of attainment are differentiated is outlined in the programme of study and described in the pass/fail grade descriptors below:

**Pass**

Candidates demonstrate a thorough knowledge and understanding of the unit being studied and all learning outcomes have been achieved. They are able to apply and present that knowledge and understanding consistently in a clear and relevant manner; whether verbally, in written form or by visual means. Work is accurate, both in terms of content and the use of English. Any inaccuracies will be minor and not affect the understanding of any work produced for journalistic purposes. Legal, regulatory and ethical issues must have been properly applied to any journalistic work.

**Fail**

Candidates have a limited knowledge and fail to achieve the learning outcomes. They lack a thorough knowledge and understanding of the unit being studied. They are unable to apply and present any knowledge and understanding consistently in a clear and relevant manner; whether verbally, in written form or by visual means. Work is often accurate, both in terms of content and the use of English. Inaccuracies may affect the understanding of any work produced for journalistic purposes. Legal, regulatory and ethical issues may have been ignored or wrongly applied.

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