NATIONAL QUALIFICATION
IN JOURNALISM

Examiners' Report

November 2018

NATIONAL QUALIFICATION IN JOURNALISM

<u>2 November 2018</u>

In November, a total of 33 candidates sat the National Qualification in Journalism (NQJ) at four centres across the country. The NQJ was awarded to 25 candidates – a pass rate of 76 per cent.

<u>AWARD WINNERS</u>

THE MEDIA LAW AWARD (MEDIA LAW AND PRACTICE – £250)

Tamara Siddiqui   *The News, Portsmouth*

This submission was head and shoulders above all the other papers. Tamara showed great knowledge and application. She scored well throughout the paper, expressing herself clearly and showing an excellent understanding of the ethical question and how to deal with the problems involved in the scenario. Congratulations!

ESSO AWARD (NEWS REPORT – £250)

Tamara Siddiqui   *The News, Portsmouth*

Tamara wrote an impressive story with an eye-catching intro and summarising all the key points in the first three pars, before going on to elaborate on all aspects, interspersing them with accurate and strong quotes. Part B showed her ability to sell her story, balance it with secondary interviews and provide a broad comprehensive list of follow-ups. Her submission was praised by the examiners as one of the best they had seen for many years.

SOCIETY OF EDITORS' AWARD (NEWS INTERVIEW – £250)

Kathryn Wylie   *The Southern Reporter*

Kathryn's story started with a strong, dramatic intro, and she continued the drama throughout the piece, retaining the reader's interest throughout. She included lots of detail which brought the story to life. The interviewee said that Kathryn was confident and demonstrated logical questioning in her interview.

NEWSQUEST AWARD (LOGBOOK – £250)

Tamara Siddiqui   *The News, Portsmouth*

A superb, high-scoring logbook and one which came top due to its depth of submissions. High marks were consistently given across a number of the key tasks and the examiners felt that Tamara's logbook best exemplified what they would like to show as a true example to all trainees ready to submit a logbook in future exams.

The following candidates, listed in alphabetical order by surname, have now gained the National Qualification in Journalism.

Hayley	Anderson	*Romford Recorder*
Daniel	Angelini	*Swindon Advertiser*
Lewis	Cox	*Shropshire Star*
Sean	Davies	*Canvey Echo*
Matthew	Dresch	*Worcester News*
Finola	Fitzpatrick	*Harrogate Advertiser*
Nicholas	Fletcher	*Lincolnshire Echo*
Rebecca	Jones	*Harwich & Manningtree Standard*
Abigail	Kellett	*Halifax Evening Courier*
Jonathan	King	*Ham & High*
Jennifer	Logan	*Worthing Herald*
John	Mason	*Melton Times*
Kelsey	Maxwell	*St Helens Star*
Keegan	Murray	*The Shetland Times*
Tom	Oakley	*Freelance*
Eleanor	Pringle	*Eastern Daily Press*
Nathalie	Raffray	*Ham & High*
Danny	Rust	*Canvey Echo*
Virginia	Sanderson	*Eastbourne Herald*
Tamara	Siddiqui	*The News, Portsmouth*
Robert	Smith	*Shropshire Star*
Charlotte	Turner	*The Herald, Plymouth*
Fraser	Whieldon	*Herts Advertiser*
Kathryn	Wylie	*The Southern Reporter*
Eleanor	Young	*Weston, Worle & Somerset Mercury*

SUMMARY

A total of 76 per cent of trainees in the November sitting of the National Qualification in Journalism (NQJ) achieved the qualification, a figure comparable to the pass rate achieved one year ago in November 2017.

Out of the 33 candidates who sat the exams, 25 were successful in all four parts – media law and practice, news report, news interview and e-logbook – achieving 'senior journalist' status.

There was a pass rate of 81 per cent in the media law and practice exam, up from 77 per cent in the previous sitting in July. The moderator confirmed that in Question 1 knowledge of the law on confidentiality needed further improvement in some cases, but that in Question 2 an overall good understanding was demonstrated of contempt, reporting prejudicial material and the restrictions imposed on reporting a preliminary hearing. Question 3 produced many good answers, and some excellent ones.

The news report exam had an overall pass rate of 78 per cent, up from 47 per cent in the previous sitting. The moderator said: "The higher pass rate for the November exam shows that candidates are having a greater national/global awareness for news stories….In part B it was pleasing to see that trainees were able to gauge a story's follow-up appeal and produce strong suggestions for this part of the exam."

There was an overall pass rate of 71 per cent in the news interview exam. The moderator confirmed that whilst many candidates grasped the story, some were let down by avoidable mistakes. However, it was pleasing to see evidence of some capable writing and a high number of candidates passing the exam.

The November NQJ saw a 100 per cent pass rate for e-logbook, the fifth in succession since July 2017. The moderator said: "There were some strong marks awarded all-round as candidates provided a depth of quality work."

An outstanding performance by Tamara Siddiqui, of *The News, Portsmouth*, saw her win the £250 prizes for news report, media law and practice, and e-logbook. Tamara achieved results of 75 per cent for news report, 84 per cent for media law, and 75 per cent for e-logbook. In particular, examiners praised Tamara's news report submission as one of the best they had seen for many years.

Special congratulations also go to Kathryn Wylie, of *The Southern Reporter*, who receives the £250 news interview prize with a mark of 65 per cent.

MEDIA LAW AND PRACTICE – 21 candidates; 17 passed – 81 per cent

A pleasing set of papers, with few failing and an excellent top result.

Question 1 tested defamation and confidentiality, with an element of ethics thrown in by way of protecting confidential sources. Most candidates spotted the defamatory dangers contained in a press release from a residents' association, but it was worrying that a number of candidates thought that such a release would gain qualified privilege under Part 2 of the Defamation Act 1992's Schedule. Knowledge of the law on confidentiality was a little flimsy in some cases.

Question 2 did test qualified privilege under Part 2 of the Schedule in the Defamation Act 1996 and numerous candidates were unaware that statements issued on a matter of public interest by a body empowered to exercise control or adjudicate on matters of concern to them, such as violence at football matches, would be covered. The second part of the question tested contempt and the dangers of reporting prejudicial material when a case may or may not have been active. Most candidates realised that in this scenario this was a grey area and there would be a need to

tread carefully. The last part of the question tested candidates' understanding of the restrictions imposed on reporting a preliminary hearing by Section 52a of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. Candidates demonstrated a general good understanding.

Question 3 produced many good answers, and in some cases excellent ones. The poorer answers looked as though candidates had not given themselves enough time in which to work out the problems, why they existed and what to do about them. The clauses covered were 2 (privacy) because it was about health, and 6 (children) because it was about the welfare of under 16s. The clue to their age was the fact the girls were not due to take GCSEs until the next academic year. Despite the comments having been made on a website that was open to the public, these were matters which clearly related to their own welfare and health, and that of another, and parental approval must be gained before going ahead with publication of such details. One girl's heart condition might not be common knowledge. Previous IPSO rulings suggest the watchdog will often regard comments lifted from online in the same way as they would an interview, therefore care must be taken in incorporating them into a story without further checks with the families. A good case study is Lightfoot v *Leicester Mercury,* where the comments were considered innocuous and neither a breach of Clause 2 or 6. Good answers to this question recognised the need to approach both families involved to seek further details and permissions. This was a good human-interest story that could have been pursued by the appropriate application of the relevant clauses.

Examiners recommend that future candidates return to the latest edition of *Essential Law for Journalists* to brush up on defamation and contempt dangers and defences and court reporting restrictions, plus case studies. Regular visits to the IPSO adjudications and the *Editors' Code Book*, along with the Judicial Studies Board's Reporting Restrictions in the Criminal Courts, would also be helpful. Both HoldtheFrontPage and Press Gazette cover the more important IPSO rulings and have regular law and ethics articles. Those candidates who do not attend an NQJ refresher are put at a great disadvantage.

For those of you who passed, congratulations, and for those who did not, plenty of revision, and good luck with your next attempt!

NEWS REPORT – 32 candidates; 25 passed – 78 per cent

The higher pass rate for the November exam shows that candidates are having a greater national/global awareness for news stories and can select the key facts on a general basis.

There is still room for improvement, particularly when working for the regional press. National news had broken the flooding problems in the north east and what the reader wanted was a comprehensive summary of the local situation – this was lacking in some stories.

Local issues, such as the village of Little Bede (population 350) being completely cut off after flood waters destroyed both bridges on roads leading to the village and the severing of the main London to Edinburgh rail line were demoted to lower parts of the story, if they were mentioned at all.

Only a few candidates filled their stories with local colour and aspects of the disaster that readers would want to know.

Shorthand was a problem for some candidates who were not able to take down quotes accurately.

In part B, it was pleasing to see that trainees were able to gauge a story's follow-up appeal and produce strong suggestions for this part of the exam.

NEWS INTERVIEW – 28 candidates; 20 passed – 71 per cent

A man with learning difficulties is attacked and seriously hurt by a gorilla at a city zoo.

After lowering himself 15 feet into a dry moat and then somehow scaling an 8ft wall, the man walks towards the gorilla, called Leonardo, which grabs the man, flings him to the ground and beats him up.

The quick actions of Leonardo's keeper, who raised the ape, averts a more serious incident. He tempts the gorilla with fruit and gets it into its sleeping quarters while two colleagues drag the injured man to safety.

This was a straightforward story with a lot of drama. There were other factors to consider; would the gorilla be destroyed? How did the man get into a private enclosure?

There was a straightforward chronology, from the incident being picked up on CCTV cameras, to the attack, the rescue and the investigation.

Most candidates appeared comfortable with the story, however some lacked details of the actual attack and failed to capture the drama. Many did not mention the man's learning difficulties until low down in the story. Few touched on the question of Leonardo's future.

While many candidates grasped the story, some were let down by avoidable mistakes; one said the gorilla was sedated, another said it was shot with a tranquilliser gun. Neither were accurate. There were also avoidable spelling mistakes.

Again, shorthand appears to be an issue with one-or two-word quotes included in candidates' stories. However, it was pleasing to see evidence of some capable writing and a high number of candidates passing the exam.

LOGBOOK – 15 candidates; 15 passed – 100 per cent

There was a smaller selection of logbooks for examiners to assess in the November exams but there were no overall issues to report. Indeed, there were some strong marks awarded all-round as candidates provided a depth of quality work.

The submission of material was also good but examiners would always recommend candidates double-check all copy which has been uploaded and also seek a second opinion from their editor or trainer.

We would advise all those compiling a logbook to make sure that if they are unsure of anything, they should seek help from their editor or trainer in the first instance, or contact the NCTJ and we will be happy to give advice ahead of submitting for marking.

National Qualification in Journalism - comparative figures

	NOV 2015	MAR 2016	JUL 2016	NOV 2016	MAR 2017	JUL 2017	NOV 2017	MAR 2018	JUL 2018	NOV 2018
TOTAL ENTRY	*NQJ*	*NQJ*	*NQJ*	*NQJ*	*NQJ*	*NQJ*	*NQJ*	*NQJ*	*NQJ*	*NQJ*
No of candidates	71	69	76	59	57	53	63	42	36	33
No of passes	43	51	59	40	41	35	49	23	17	25
No of failures	28	18	17	19	16	18	14	19	19	8
% passed	**61**	**74**	**78**	**68**	**72**	**66**	**78**	**55**	**47**	**76**
FIRST-TIMERS										
No of candidates	51	50	57	43	43	41	43	33	23	15
No of passes	33	36	45	27	33	32	36	19	13	10
No of failures	18	14	12	16	10	9	7	14	10	5
% passed	**65**	**72**	**79**	**63**	**77**	**78**	**84**	**58**	**57**	**67**
RE-SITS										
No of candidates	20	19	19	16	14	12	20	9	13	18
No of passes	10	15	14	13	8	3	13	4	4	15
No of failures	10	4	5	3	6	9	7	5	9	3
% passed	**50**	**79**	**74**	**81**	**57**	**25**	**65**	**44**	**31**	**83**

Analysis of figures for each exam section (first-timers and re-sits)

	NOV 2015	MAR 2016	JUL 2016	NOV 2016	MAR 2017	JUL 2017	NOV 2017	MAR 2018	JUL 2018	NOV 2018
NEWS INTERVIEW										
No of candidates	59	61	71	52	54	50	60	42	32	28
No of passes	43	47	60	35	42	35	47	27	19	20
No of failures	16	14	11	17	12	15	13	15	13	8
% passed	**73**	**77**	**85**	**67**	**78**	**70**	**78**	**64**	**59**	**71**
NEWS REPORT										
No of candidates	68	66	71	56	54	51	63	42	36	32
No of passes	44	52	56	40	39	34	49	23	17	25
No of failures	24	14	15	16	16	17	14	19	19	7
% passed	**65**	**79**	**79**	**71**	**72**	**67**	**78**	**55**	**47**	**78**
MEDIA LAW & PRACTICE										
No of candidates	60	59	65	49	50	48	46	37	30	21
No of passes	45	53	59	39	41	47	41	24	23	17
No of failures	15	6	6	10	12	1	5	13	7	4
% passed	**75**	**90**	**91**	**80**	**82**	**98**	**89**	**65**	**77**	**81**

	NOV 2015	MAR 2016	JUL 2016	NOV 2016	MAR 2017	JUL 2017	NOV 2017	MAR 2018	JUL 2018	NOV 2018
LOGBOOK										
No of candidates	56	55	61	46	43	41	45	33	22	15
No of passes	53	50	58	45	42	41	45	33	22	15
No of failures	3	5	3	1	5	0	0	0	0	0
% passed	**95**	**91**	**95**	**98**	**98**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**