

NCTJ Diploma in Journalism

Procedures for transition arrangements from September 2020

Following a review of the level 3 Diploma in Journalism, the qualification level will be raised to Level 5 from 1 September 2020. The new diploma qualification will be recognised at Level 5 to reflect the increased level of digital skills and knowledge used by journalists over the last few years. The diploma has progressively evolved to include the digital skills as standard throughout the qualification, but the level of the qualification has remained the same.

The industry-led Diploma in Journalism is a vocationally-related qualification that assesses occupational competence. Employers support the change in level and emphasis on digital skills throughout the diploma which reflects the greater level of digital skills and tools that trainee journalists must have when entering the industry.

The NCTJ has considered the knowledge, skills and understanding that a learner is expected to demonstrate against the regulatory level descriptors and compared them with other qualifications at a range of levels to ensure the knowledge and skills outcomes are most appropriate to the Level 5 descriptors. There is no similar regulated qualification to benchmark against, but the NCTJ will do so if one becomes available.

Centres delivering NCTJ-accredited courses have been contacted over the last 18 months to consider their views and position on raising the diploma to Level 5 and the overwhelming majority agree the standards and rigor of the qualification are equivalent to the higher level.

The content and structure of the qualification remains the same, but grade descriptors will be revised and updated to differentiate the standard of attainment that learners must achieve to gain the overall qualification. We have also considered the level assigned to each unit is appropriate when considered against the qualification level as a whole.

The Level 5 Diploma in Journalism qualification will be available for first registrations from 1 September 2020.

Arrangements for centres delivering accredited courses

From 1 September 2020, we expect the majority of new registrations for NCTJ courses will be registered on the Level 5 qualification.

It will still be possible for centres to register courses starting in 2020-21 on the Level 3 qualification which will continue to be operational on the Qualifications Register until September 2022 – a transitional period to ensure there are no adverse effects on learners.

A centre must inform us if they intend to register their cohort on the Level 3 diploma after 1 September 2020. This may be due to funding arrangements or because students have

already applied for advance learner loans or because it too late to revise their course marketing.

We will expect all new courses to transition to the Level 5 qualification by September 2021. Candidates on courses currently registered on the Level 3 qualification will have until 30 September 2023 to complete the qualification.

Modules completed on the Level 3 qualification are not transferable to the Level 5 qualification, because of the difference in level between the two qualifications.

If centres wish to transfer a course currently registered on the Level 3 qualification to the Level 5 qualification, this is only permissible if the candidates have not completed any assessments for modules on the Level 3 qualification.

The certification end date for the Level 3 diploma will be 30 September 2023. Any learners who have not completed the Level 3 qualification by this date, may apply for a credit certificate for the modules they have completed.

Arrangements for distance learners

New registrations from 1 September 2020 will be registered on the Level 5 qualification.

Distance learners currently registered on the Level 3 qualification will have until 1 September 2023 to complete the qualification.

Modules completed on the Level 3 qualification are not transferable to the Level 5 qualification, because of the difference in level between the two qualifications.

If a distance learner currently registered on the Level 3 qualification wishes to transfer to the Level 5 qualification, any modules achieved on the Level 3 diploma will not be transferable to the new qualification.

The certification end date for the Level 3 diploma will be 30 September 2023. Any distance learners who have not completed the Level 3 qualification by this date, may apply for a credit certificate for the modules they have completed.

Arrangements for junior journalist apprentices

New apprentices on the junior journalist apprenticeship will continue to be registered for the Level 3 Diploma in Journalism qualification, as this is the mandated qualification in the junior journalist apprenticeship standard.

The junior journalist apprenticeship standard is currently awaiting review by the journalism employer trailblazer group and the Institute for Apprenticeship and Technical Education (IfATE). The standard and associated assessment plan will be reviewed and it may be updated to a Level 5 standard to accommodate the qualification level change. Timeframes for this review are to be confirmed by IfATE, who put the review on hold due to the coronavirus pandemic, but the qualification update may trigger the review. We

anticipate that the date for final registrations for the Level 3 apprenticeship standard could be up to December 2021. This allows sufficient time for apprentices on an 18-month scheme to complete the Level 3 diploma before the 'gateway' to the end-point assessment (6 weeks before the end-date) and before the certification end date of 30 September 2023.

Withdrawal of the Level 3 Diploma in Journalism

The Level 3 qualification will remain available for a further three years from September 2020 to accommodate the transition arrangements outlined above. An operational end date of 30 September 2022 and a certification end date of 30 September 2023 will be set and notified to our regulators: Ofqual; Qualifications Wales; and CCEA.