

SENIOR JOURNALIST

Details of standard

Occupation summary

This occupation is found in media businesses such as TV, radio, online and print (newspapers and magazines), public relations and communications.

The broad purpose of the occupation is to inform the public – either through news and current events, or through the creation of authoritative features, opinion or analysis.

In their daily work, an employee in this occupation interacts with colleagues within the same organisation, representatives of other businesses/organisations and members of the general public. Typically, work will be completed in an office or in varied locations, and will usually involve unsociable hours or shift working.

An employee in this occupation will be responsible for researching and reporting, creating, as well as commissioning, content. This can include filming, recording and editing audio and video in a deadline driven environment; this could be to inform or entertain on TV, radio, online or in print. This could be across multiple genres – from crime to politics to technology to sport to fashion. An employee may also commission work, source material, speak to contacts, head assignments and in some cases, lead a team, where resources will have to be allocated and managed, and

develop/mentor junior staff. They will talk directly and engage with the audience and be called upon to make strategic decisions, in what can be unpredictable or changing circumstances and understand the need for audience/readership engagement and analysis of audience analytics. They will have full responsibility for finding, researching and telling stories tailored to employer's needs and target audience. They will also manage contributions to stories from an array of sources, including freelancers, user generated content, the public, and other specialist staff. Throughout, sound editorial judgements must be displayed with a thorough understanding and application of the law, relevant codes of practice and ethical principles. For much of the time a senior journalist acts alone, making decisions on content and publication, reporting to an editor (or similar figure). There is likely to be even more autonomy in smaller organisations. The duties and responsibilities of their immediate manager must also be understood for occasions when they have to stand-in for them.

Typical job titles include:

Senior journalist, Journalist, Senior reporter, Broadcast journalist, Content editor, Digital editor, Audience relationship manager, Features editor, Multimedia reporter, Video journalist

Entry requirements

Whilst any entry requirements will be a matter for individual employers, an apprentice might be expected to have either: gained a regulated Diploma in Journalism qualification; achieved a degree (any subject); or completed the Junior Journalist Apprenticeship. Individual employers will identify any relevant entry requirements in terms of previous qualifications, training, work experience or other criteria. Some employers will seek candidates who have previously worked as a journalist.

Occupation duties

Duty

Duty 1 Critically analyses and interprets audience data to inform story-telling so as to best serve the audience's needs, increase engagement and reach new people.

Duty 2 Ensure all work complies with the legal and ethical regulations that apply to journalism

Duty 3 Apply the appropriate methodologies and approaches to build contacts that will help develop current and future stories

KSBs

K1 K5 K8 K9

S1 S2 S4 S9 S13 S16

B2

K2 K3 K23

S7 S8 S9 S11 S19

B3 B4

K4 K11 K24

S3 S10 S11 S12 S14 S28

Duty 4 Critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of any story-telling method prior to publishing to ensure the employer's desired impact

B3 B6

K6 K7 K21

S5 S15

B1 B2

Duty 5 Research and create content tailored to audience and employer's needs

K1 K3 K5 K7 K8 K12 K13 K14 K15 K22

S2 S3 S4 S5 S6 S7 S15 S16 S22 S29

B2 B4

Duty 6 Identify, prepare and conduct interviews using techniques and strategies to extract the maximum relevant information from interviewees

K10 K11

S11 S12 S17 S18 S19 S28

B3 B6

Duty 7 Determines appropriate ways to manage user-generated content and those who provide the information

K4 K7 K12 K13 K14 K15 K24

S6 S7 S14 S15 S16 S19 S20

Duty 8 Create and deliver video, audio and photographic multimedia content for multi-platform journalistic use

B1 B3

K7 K14 K15 K23

S6 S7 S20 S21 S23 S29

B2 B5

Duty 9 Review, edit and format material produced by others ready for publication/broadcast in line with ethical, legal and regulatory requirements.

K2 K15 K18 K25

S7 S8 S9 S21 S23 S24 S27

B4 B5

Duty 10 Lead assignments ensuring they are authentic and accurate, resulting in the publication/broadcast of material which leads to positive audience engagement

K15 K16 K17 K18 K21 K25

S21 S23 S24 S25 S27

B3 B5

Duty 11 Mentor junior members of staff to ensure their work is of a quality to optimise the product's position in the marketplace

K16 K17 K18 K19 K25

S21 S24 S25 S26

B3 B5

Duty 12 Ensures and evidences continuous professional development; maintaining their knowledge and skills in relation to industry developments that influence their work, including emerging trends, innovations, tools and techniques

K3 K17 K19 K20 K22 K23 K24

S22 S25 S26

B1 B7

KSBs

Knowledge

K1: Employer's target audience, both in terms of demographic and sociographic profile, and understanding audiences' needs from the media.

K2: The relevant legislation, regulation and ethical issues that affect journalists and confidential material including: defamation; contempt of court; reporting restrictions; privacy, copyright.

K3: Current developments and changes to law and regulation and how they can affect a journalist's work including; the codes of conduct/practice and relevant regulatory bodies to comply with such as The Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO), the Ofcom Broadcasting Code, BBC editorial guidelines and individual employer guidelines.

K4: The tools and techniques to use to identify, locate and establish physical and on-line contacts/sources to inform and contribute to content.

K5: The interacting audience data [audience analytics] and how to use that information to drive audience

K6: Use of story-telling concepts, how they work individually and how they can work in combination

K7: How to generate original and exclusive content and the contexts within which the content can be used

K8: How to identify and use techniques to extract compelling stories from (big) data sets, such as financial information from companies or government.

K9: How to present data stories in a visual way that helps the target audience understand the subject matter, using current and non-standard techniques.

K10: The techniques, strategies and lines of questioning to extract the maximum, relevant information from interviewees whether face-to-face, by telephone or electronic means.

K11: When specialist subject knowledge is required, and how to obtain this using the appropriate research techniques to ensure accuracy.

K12: The theoretical and practical uses of social media platforms, the issues/risks and how that aligns with the employer's target audience and protocols

K13: The technical requirements of high quality, multi-platform digital/social journalism e.g. usage of cameras, mobile phones and editing and publishing applications/programs

K14: How to shoot and edit video and audio to meet standards for publication on different platforms

K15: Own employer's editing protocols and programs; how to proof read content provided and edit as required

K16: How to motivate and influence others to achieve results that meet requirements

K17: Own role and responsibilities and within the wider team and impact on others

K18: How to develop coaching strategies and training plans to help others improve

K19: How to use research and analysis to identify areas of learning, both in the short and long term

K20: How to identify current industry trends across the media and how to apply these to journalism

K21: How to communicate potential story ideas and present in a manner appropriate to diverse audiences, adapting communication techniques accordingly

K22: Why it is important to seek feedback on own working practices and evaluate own practice for continuous improvement

K23: How to maintain your professional ethics and practices, and keep abreast of new developments within the media industry that may increase reputational risk

K24: How clear, timely communication can contribute to productive working relationships.

K25: The techniques used to lead a team, how to allocate and delegate tasks within a team and monitor their performance.

Skills

S1: Identify and use techniques to extract compelling stories from (big) data sets, social media and dense reports, such as financial information from companies or government to create the most effective story or feature for the target audience..

S2: Undertake thorough research before reporting to ensure that content/material published or broadcast is accurate, compelling and verifiable

S3: Identify, select and use multiple sources of information, cross-checking and corroborating when necessary. Take accurate, relevant notes when and where needed

S4: Present data stories in a visual way that helps the target audience understand the subject matter.

S5: Research, evaluate and select a method and the platform(s) to be used to tell stories which will meet the employer's strategic goals, reach the biggest audience and satisfy their needs. Seek ways

to modify or introduce new techniques; combining information from multiple sources including people, reports, data and social media.

S6: Produce content in accordance with legal, regulatory and organisational requirements; use different multimedia combinations, where needed, producing and sourcing video and audio assets

S7: Make decisions and judgements at speed and when under pressure, on the way stories are researched and presented, ensuring the media outlet is leading when breaking news

S8: Assess the legal or regulatory issues and take responsibility for a course of action with regard to publication, and decide when professional legal advice is needed.

S9: Interrogate sources of information to establish the demographic and sociographic profile of the employer's target audience to find where suitable contacts could be located

S10: Use contacts to find exclusive stories which meet the needs of the target audience; verify information from contacts and critically review its short and long-term implications

S11: Identify and evaluate the qualities of self and contacts to make decisions as to how best to nurture the informant; assessing where legal/regulatory/ethical problems may arise from working with a contact

S12: Develop strategies to handle contacts and maintain loyalty, even when their information may not always lead to a story

S13: Use audience data to evaluate the success of the strategy used and how that can inform future decision-making

S14: Monitor relevant social media on a systematic basis, proactively seek new sources of user-generated content that will help improve targeted content, the number of viewers/readers and depth of engagement

S15: Evaluate a wide range of social media platforms, identifying and selecting the appropriate social media for the content, maintaining the correct tone for the platform being used.

S16: Produce stories which resonate with the audience as measured by audience analytics, social media interaction and reach, plus other internal "tools" used by employers to understand audience sentiment.

S17: Undertake different types of interviews to extract information, even from those who are reluctant to speak; identifying and selecting the right interviewing technique to suit the interviewee.

S18: Critically analyse answers from interviewees to inform questioning and, if needed, other people to speak to. Probe for detail and inconsistencies in replies from interviewee

S19: Take responsibility for ensuring that material from outside sources is verified, conforms to all legal, regulatory and ethical issues and is presented to the audience in the correct manner

S20: Critically evaluate own and team members work to ensure additional multimedia content is produced to industry standards and is of a quality to maintain and advance the organisation's reputation in the industry, making changes when needed.

S21: Format and edit other's material to meet the employer's audience, following employer's guides to editing, using approved programs and checking materials taking responsibility for devising strategies to reduce the time and costs of the editing process

S22: Proactively develop and maintain own professional competence, with the willingness to learn new processes and technical skills, and manage own continuing professional development (CPD)

S23: Lead the team in producing authentic, accurate and verifiable, publication/broadcast content

S24: Research and set performance indicators for the team, communicating objectives and goals to team members; develops coaching strategies and training plans to help others improve.

S25: Seek constructive feedback from relevant people about your performance; taking action as required

S26: Build engagement, motivation and develop high performance, agile and collaborative cultures, demonstrating leadership skills and developing junior colleagues

S27: Work through complex editorial situations and dilemmas, at speed and when under pressure, demonstrating well-developed editorial judgement in line with their organisation's editorial values and aims

S28: Use and develop systems to track contributions from outside sources, including any agreements made with the people submitting the content

S29: Produces video or audio content which "draws in" the viewer/listener/user and adds value to the story being told

Behaviours

B1: Proactive and reacts positively to emerging trends; is curious, forward-looking, open to change and looks to find ways which will enhance the overall experience of the reader/viewer/end-user

B2: Works tenaciously and on own initiative to tell stories in the most eye-catching and compelling manner. Takes responsibility for seeing the "big picture" amidst a welter of information of data.

B3: Work ethically and with integrity; exercising autonomy when making judgements and offering advice to others. Is empathetic, builds trust and is a good listener while still critically evaluating the information being received

B4: Work in a transparent and open way; making judgements free from bias and taking on responsibility as needed as to what should and should not be changed in the editing process. Adapts positively to changing work priorities and patterns, ensuring deadlines continue to be met.

B5: Lead by example; committed to completing work within a set timeframe to industry standards, with excellent time management and prioritisation skills. Encourages diversity and equal opportunity both in their storytelling style, the content agenda and the team. Creates a supportive culture, allowing others to develop, valuing initiative in other team members and recognising the variety of skills available, with an ability to motivate, listen to and adapt to other's needs.

B6: Demonstrate flexibility and resilience - Can converse with people from all walks of life and develops strategies and tactics for approaching different people. Carries out courageous, accurate, clear journalism to the highest ethical standards

B7: Undertake continuous professional development; Maintains, updates and grows knowledge and skills for the role. Is seen as an approachable "guru" when it comes to emerging trends and practices in journalism. A "go to" person for junior reporters, on what is happening and is likely to happen

Qualifications

English & Maths

Apprentices without level 2 English and maths will need to achieve this level prior to taking the End-Point Assessment. For those with an education, health and care plan or a legacy statement, the apprenticeship's English and maths minimum requirement is Entry Level 3. A British Sign Language (BSL) qualification is an alternative to the English qualification for those whose primary language is BSL.

Other mandatory qualifications

National Qualification in Journalism (NQJ)

Level: 6 (non-degree qualification)

Ofqual regulated

Additional details

Occupational Level:

7

Duration (months):

18

Review

This apprenticeship standard will be reviewed after three years

Version log

VERSION	DATE UPDATED	CHANGE	PREVIOUS VERSION
1	18/06/2020	Standard and assessment plan published	Not available
1	01/10/2014	Initial creation	Not available