

Destinations of NCTJ Diploma in Journalism Students

A report on research commissioned by the NCTJ

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Table of Contents



Acknowledgements	4
Executive summary	5
1 Background	5
2 Six-month follow-up	5
3 Three-year follow-up	7
1 Introduction	9
1.1 Background	9
1.2 The NCTJ level 3 Diploma in Journalism	9
1.3 Research approaches	10
2 Six-month follow-up	17
2.1 Current activities of students	17
2.2 Nature of employment	19
2.3 Nature of contract	28
2.4 Salary	29
2.5 Region of work	30
2.6 Reason why taken the job	31
2.7 Finding employment and the role of internships	33
2.8 Role of NCTJ qualification in gaining employment	35
2.9 Activities of those not in employment	37
2.10 Learning activities since starting employment	39
2.11 Views on the NCTJ experience	42
2.12 Summary	48
3 Three-year follow-up	50
3.1 Current activities of students	50
3.2 Journalism-related employment	52
3.3 Sector	56
3.4 Region of work	58
3.5 Nature of employment	58
3.6 Salary	60
3.7 Reason why taken the job	60
3.8 Finding out about the job	62
3.9 Role of NCTJ qualification in gaining employment	62
3.10 Preparing individuals for work	68
3.11 Views on the NCTJ experience	71
3.12 Satisfaction with career and general well-being	73
3.13 Summary	75
4 Discussion and conclusions	77
5 Annex 1	79

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All views and opinions expressed in this independent report are those of the author and are not necessarily shared by the NCTJ.

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Executive summary



1 Background

As individuals have invested their time and money in gaining an NCTJ diploma qualification, it is appropriate that they know what impact their investment will have. They should know whether the diploma is likely to lead to employment, whether it will increase their chances of getting the type of job they want and what level of salary they may earn. To answer these information needs, the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) has commissioned this report which examines the 'destinations' of people who have studied for the NCTJ level 3 Diploma in Journalism.

This report is based on two surveys of different cohorts of individuals who have completed their course of study for the NCTJ diploma:

- a short-term follow-up, contacting the individuals some 6-10 months after studying for the diploma; and
- a long-term follow-up which has re-contacted individuals some three years after their studies for the diploma.

The surveys cover all those who completed a course of study, regardless of whether they attained the NCTJ diploma or not. We have three 'attainment' levels – gold standard, diploma and incomplete (for those who have yet to complete the NCTJ diploma). As would be expected, response rate to the surveys and labour market outcomes are correlated to these attainment levels and so we have weighted the responses to reflect qualification attainment levels.

The research approach is based on that used by the UK's Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA), which conducts a regular destinations surveys (at a 6-month stage) and a longitudinal survey (at 3 years) of graduates from the UK's HE institutes. In addition, as the short-term survey mirrors the approach used in its examination of the Destinations of NCTJ Diploma in Journalism Students in 2015¹, we can compare between the 2015 and 2019 surveys.

The data from the surveys is combined with data from HESA which allows us to benchmark the post-qualification activities of the NCTJ diploma students with national averages.

2 Six-month follow-up

Post-diploma destinations of students

Eighty-six per cent of those who had studied for the NCTJ diploma (whether they achieved the qualification or not) were in work at the time of the follow-up survey (or about to start a job very shortly). This is higher than (i) the comparable percentage in 2015 of 82 per cent and (ii) the 75 per cent of leavers from UK higher education courses across all subjects.

The higher the level of attainment of the NCTJ diploma, the more likely it is that the individual will be in employment – 93 per cent of those who attained the gold standard were in employment, compared to 85 per cent of those who attained the diploma standard and 84 per cent of those who did not complete their diploma.

¹ *Destinations of NCTJ Diploma in Journalism Students*, National Council for the Training of Journalists, 2015

Nature of employment

Seventy-six per cent of those who had a full-time or part-time job were in a journalism-related job, slightly lower than the 79 per cent in 2015. The likelihood of having gained a journalism-related job varies according to the level of qualification obtained. Those with gold standard were more likely to be in a journalism-related job (90 per cent) when compared to those who had the diploma level (78 per cent) and 67 per cent of those who did not complete the diploma.

The majority of respondents in work were engaged in the creative media sectors – 27 per cent in newspapers, 15 per cent in magazines, four per cent in television, four per cent in radio and 13 per cent in the online/digital sector. Thirty-two per cent are working in other sectors of the economy.

The majority (68 per cent) are in a permanent or open-ended contract, with a further nine per cent in a fixed-term contract of 12 months or more, with 17 per cent self-employed or freelance. Data from HESA suggests that fewer of the ‘all graduate’ population were on permanent contracts (63 per cent) and fewer were self-employed or freelance (six per cent).

The median salary for those working after their NCTJ diploma is £22,500, an increase on the median salary found in 2015 of £17,500. It is also slightly more than the comparable level for all HESA graduates of £22,000.

The NCTJ qualification was regarded as being ‘required’ by 48 per cent of all respondents (with 17 per cent saying that it was a formal requirement and 31 per cent who stated that, whilst it was not a formal requirement, it was an advantage) and ‘not required’ by 52 per cent. This is a decrease on the levels found in 2015 (61 per cent) but is consistent with (i) lower proportions being employed in journalism jobs and (ii) greater levels of employment across the economy and away from the ‘traditional media’ sectors. Amongst those in journalism jobs, 60 per cent stated that having the diploma was required (with 22 per cent that it was a necessity and 38 per cent an advantage) and 40 per cent that it was not required.

Activities of those not in employment

Only relatively few respondents to the overall survey were not in some form of employment at the time of the research. But of these, the majority (77 per cent) intend to look for journalism-related work in the future.

Learning activities since starting employment

Forty-three per cent of those in work had undertaken some learning activities since starting employment. In the main, this covered professional skills and was paid for by the employer. The average length of learning activities for those that had done some was four days.

The learning activity was mainly considered necessary to tailor skills to their specific employer needs, raise skills to a higher level or address specific, employer-related skills issues. Only a minority (seven per cent) stated that the training was necessary to fill gaps that the diploma curriculum did not cover.

Views on the NCTJ experience

In the main, those who have completed the NCTJ diploma believe that it prepares them well for what they choose to do next. Eighty-one per cent state that it has prepared them well for employment, and 39 per cent that it had prepared them well for self-employment or starting their own business. These ratings are at a very similar level to those found by HESA to HE courses across all subjects.

3 Three-year follow-up

Current activities

More than nine out of ten (92 per cent) of respondents were working. Of the eight per cent not working, two per cent were unemployed, two per cent engaged in further studies, with three per cent 'doing something else' (e.g. retired, travelling, maternity leave, etc). These employment rates are higher than found in the HESA longitudinal data, where 86 per cent were recorded in employment.

Sixty-six per cent of the respondents are in a journalism-related job; 34 per cent not. This is lower than found in the six-month survey in 2015, suggesting that some respondents who started their careers in journalism have left it for other careers, but that there has not been a compensating flow into journalism from those who started their career in other occupations.

The relationship between level of NCTJ diploma qualification and positive labour market outcomes noted in the six-month follow-up is maintained in this longer-term follow-up. Ninety-five per cent of those who qualified at gold standard, compared to 89 per cent of those who did not complete their diploma are in employment; 81 per cent of those who attained at gold standard are working in a journalism-related job, compared with 64 per cent of those who did not complete their diploma.

The dispersion of employment away from the 'traditional media' is again seen in the longer-term follow-up. Thirty-nine per cent of the respondents were working in the wider economy – this is particularly so for those in non-journalism related jobs (79 per cent) but even amongst those working in journalism-related jobs nearly a fifth (19 per cent) are working in the wider economy.

The average salary being earned is £27,500, considerably higher than those being earned by the respondents to the six-month survey. This earnings level is the same as for the HESA all-graduate data.

Role of NCTJ qualification in gaining their job

Fewer than half of respondents (47 per cent) believe that their NCTJ diploma was a requirement for their employer (14 per cent saying it was a formal requirement and 33 per cent that, whilst it was not a formal requirement, it was advantageous). This is the same level as for the six-month follow-up. Again, this is higher for those working in journalism jobs (where 69 per cent said it was a requirement) than those in non-journalism jobs (seven per cent). It is also higher in some sectors (particularly newspapers at 82 per cent). It is less likely to be seen as being a requirement in online or digital (69 per cent saying it was not required), in PR (71 per cent) or in the wider economy (69 per cent).

When comparing the perceived importance of a variety of factors to their employers, the most important is thought to be evidence of skills and competencies, followed by the fact that journalism was studied, and the nature of the qualification. The respondents believe that the class or grade of qualification gained is the least important factor. Respondents to the HESA all-graduate survey rate their degree as being more important to their employer on each of these factors.

Using skills developed during the NCTJ qualification in work

Sixty-three per cent of those who studied for an NCTJ diploma believed that it had prepared them well for work. The higher the qualification level, the more likely it is that the individuals believe that the NCTJ has prepared them well (87 per cent of those with gold standard, 62 per cent of those with diploma compared to 49 per cent of those whose diploma is incomplete). Eighty-one per cent of those working in a journalism role believe the diploma had prepared them well, compared to 35 per cent of those working in a non-journalism role.

Eighty-six per cent of those who studied for an NCTJ diploma believe that they use the skills developed during their course in their current work, the same as for the HESA all-graduate respondents.

Views of the NCTJ experience

Respondents were asked whether, if they were to choose their qualification again, they would make the same choices. Thirty-four per cent of those who gained the NCTJ diploma stated that they would do a different subject, 24 per cent that they would work to a different type of qualification and 24 per cent that they would do something completely different. On these measures, the NCTJ is ranked very similarly to the HESA all-graduate data.

Fifty-seven per cent of NCTJ diploma students feel that their NCTJ course was good value for money, a lower rating than the HESA all-graduate data, where 66 per cent believing that their course was good value for money.

Satisfaction with career to date and general well-being

Seventy-eight per cent of NCTJ diploma students are satisfied with their career to-date (31 per cent being very satisfied and 47 per cent satisfied). Those working and those working in a journalism-related job are more likely to be satisfied. This level of satisfaction is lower than for the HESA all-graduate sample, where 88 per cent are satisfied with their career.

The majority of NCTJ diploma students are 'satisfied with their lives' (scoring 6.99 on a 0 -10 scale), the majority agree that the things that 'they do with their lives are worthwhile' (score of 6.99) and feel 'happy' (score of 6.95). However, NCTJ graduates feel less satisfied with their life than the HESA all-graduate sample (average score of 7.56), are less likely to feel that the things they do are worthwhile (HESA average score of 7.74) and are less generally happy (HESA all-graduate score of 7.43).

1 Introduction



1.1 Background

When individuals invest their time and money in getting a qualification, they are rightly interested in knowing what impact that investment will have: whether it will increase their employment chances, whether it will make them more likely to get the type of job they want and what type of salary a job may command. Because of this, the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) needs to understand what happens to people who have taken the NCTJ level 3 Diploma in Journalism, and has commissioned research to enable it to do this.

1.2 The NCTJ level 3 Diploma in Journalism

The NCTJ level 3 Diploma in Journalism is an industry recognised, entry-level qualification. It can lead to eligibility for the National Qualification in Journalism (NQJ), the NCTJ's professional, senior journalism qualification.

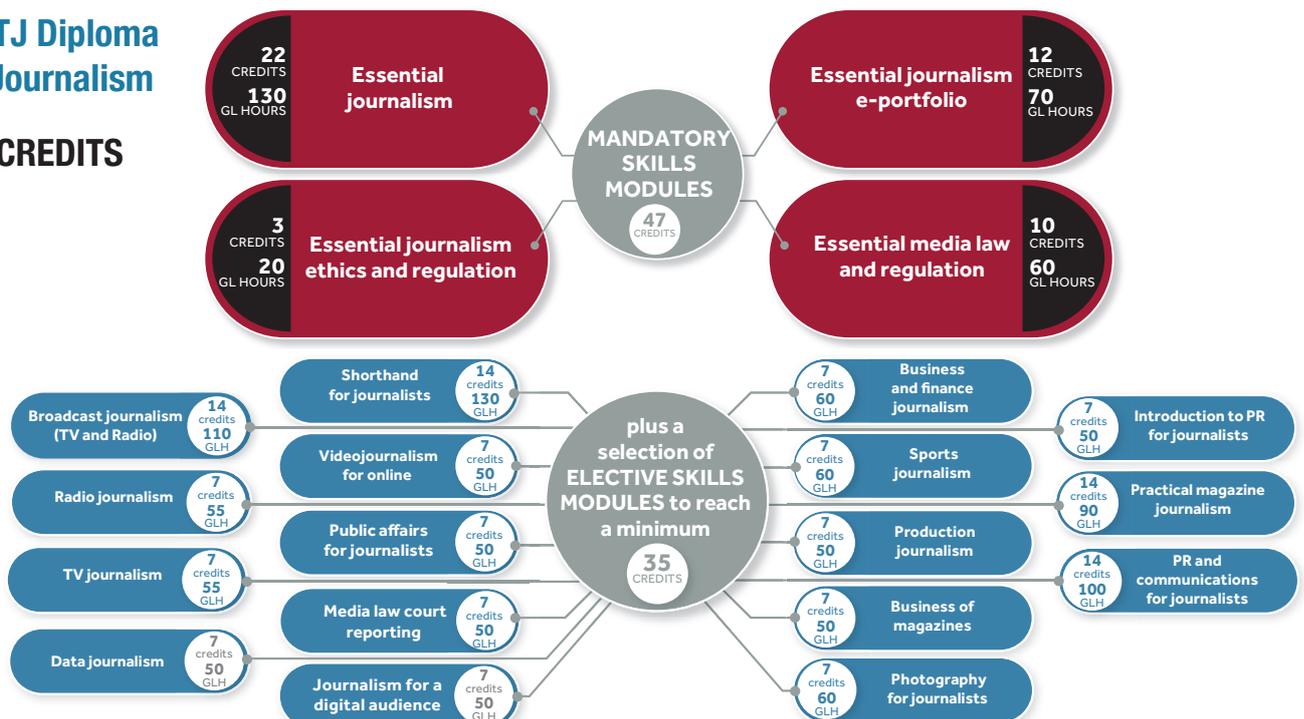
The NCTJ accredits 37 training centres across the country to deliver the training for NCTJ qualifications including the Diploma in Journalism. Training centres can be based in higher education institutions, colleges of further education or independent training providers.

To achieve the diploma, candidates must pass:

- four mandatory subjects: (i) essential journalism, (ii) essential journalism e-portfolio, (iii) essential media law and regulation and (iv) essential journalism ethics and regulation; plus
- at least four of the elective options, taken from: broadcast journalism (TV and radio), radio journalism, business and finance journalism, shorthand for journalists, video journalism for online, sports journalism, introduction to PR for journalists, practical magazine journalism, public affairs, production journalism, PR and communications for journalists, media law court reporting, business of magazines and photography for journalists, TV journalism. Options are in development for data journalism and advanced digital journalism.

NCTJ Diploma in Journalism

82 CREDITS



To pass, candidates must achieve grades A-E in all modules; and/or a minimum 60 words per minute shorthand (if studied). A minimum of 82 credits is required to complete the qualification.

The NCTJ diploma can be awarded at two levels:

- The **gold standard**, which entails getting grades A – C in all mandatory modules and 100 words per minutes in the shorthand examination. Candidates may also gain a ‘gold standard’ diploma without shorthand as long as they gain A – C grades in all subjects taken including all mandatory modules earning a minimum 82 credits.
- The **diploma standard**, which entails getting grades A –E in all modules, and 60 words per minute in the shorthand examination.

Individuals who do not achieve these levels have yet to reach the required standard and their diploma attainment is not yet complete and re-examinations are necessary.

1.3 Research approaches

There are two research approaches covered in this research report, namely:

- a six-month follow-up of NCTJ students, who completed their course of study in 2018; and
- a three-year follow-up of students who completed their course of study in 2015.

Whilst broadly similar, there are distinctions between the research approaches, so we describe each of them separately below.

1.3.1 Six-month follow-up

The six-month follow-up research uses the same approach as used in the NCTJ’s first destinations research, published in 2015³. This itself was based on that used by the UK’s Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA), which conducts regular destinations surveys of graduates from the UK’s HE institutes. Continuing the same methodology as this established survey gives us the advantages of (i) having data to compare over time, (ii) being able to use a well-respected approach, that produces data which is widely used in UK policy making and (iii) giving us nationally benchmarked data against which to compare.

We have identified all those individuals who had completed their course of study between May to October, 2018 and have a contactable e-mail address, a total of 939 individuals. We contacted all of these in March via email asking them to complete an online survey. We achieved 187 responses, a response rate of 20 per cent. This is a slight improvement rate on the 2015 research, which achieved a response rate of 19 per cent.

Because not all individuals ‘complete’ the diploma we expected a differential response rate according to qualification attainment level: for example, those that attained a higher level of qualification level would be more likely to respond. If this is combined with the likelihood that people with different qualification success levels could be expected to have different employment outcomes (i.e. the higher the qualification level, the more likely the individual will be employed) and different views about the NCTJ qualification process, it was likely that if the data was left unweighted it would introduce some bias into the results. We therefore decided to weight the responses received to reflect actual qualification attainment levels as recorded in the NCTJ’s database.

³ NCTJ, *Destinations of NCTJ Diploma in Journalism Students*, authored by Mark Spilsbury, 2015.

The report is available at: <http://www.nctj.com/downloadlibrary/NCTJ%20Destinations%20Diploma%20Final%20low%20res.pdf>

The appropriate control total is the total sample size, excluding those for whom we did not have a viable email address. This comes to 939, with proportions of:

Table 1.1: Proportions attaining different qualification levels

Qualification level	n	%
Gold standard	187	20
Diploma	358	38
Incomplete	394	42
Total	939	100

Source: NCTJ internal database

Throughout the report below we compare the findings to the data from the latest HESA data available (2016 – 17)⁴. It should be noted that the comparison is not an exact one. HESA's data is, by definition, those who have completed a higher education degree at a HE institution. The NCTJ's diploma is at level 3 and is delivered by a range of different education and training establishments, including HE institutions (where it may be delivered as part of a wider undergraduate course in journalism), FE colleges or independent training providers. However, the availability of the HESA data does give some context to that which we produce here and is therefore of value.

Throughout the report we use a number of descriptive variables to highlight trends in the data. In the main these relate to personal characteristics and details of the NCTJ qualification attained, including level of attainment, type of course and nature of educational and training establishment. In broad terms:

- 45 per cent of the respondents are male, 54 per cent female;
- the respondents are mainly young with 67 per cent aged 24 and below;
- the majority of the respondents are from white ethnic groups (89 per cent);
- six per cent of respondents have a health problem or disability that limits the type of work that they can do; and
- the respondents are highly qualified with 27 per cent having a level 5 qualification (postgraduate level), 62 per cent to level 4 (undergraduate degree or equivalent) and with only 10 per cent being qualified below degree level.

The characteristics of the respondents in the 2019 survey are broadly similar to those in 2015, although such differences that exist relate to age. There are a higher proportion in the youngest age groups (18 – 21), with 22 per cent in the 2019 research, compared to 11 per cent in 2015.

⁴ Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education in the United Kingdom 2016/17, Office for National Statistics, available at <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/publications/destinations-2016-17>

Table 1.2: Personal characteristics

		2015			2019
		%			%
Sex			Sex		
	Male	47		Male	45
	Female	53		Female	54
	Prefer not to say	0		Prefer not to say	1
Age			Age		
	18 - 21	11		18 - 21	22
	22 - 24	51		22 - 24	45
	25 - 29	26		25 - 29	20
	30 - 39	6		30 - 44	10
	40 - 49	3		45 and over	3
	50 and over	2		Prefer not to say	0
	Prefer not to say	2			
Ethnicity			Ethnicity		
	White	88		White	89
	Non-white	11		Non-white	11
	Prefer not to say	0		Prefer not to say	0
Disability			Disability		
	Yes	4		Yes	6
	No	92		No	90
	Prefer not to say	4		Prefer not to say	3
Qualification level			Qualification level		
	Level 5 (postgraduate qualification)	35		Level 5 (postgraduate qualification)	27
	Level 4 (undergraduate degree or equivalent)	53		Level 4 (undergraduate degree or equivalent)	62
	Below level 4 (A levels, GCSE/O levels, other. No qualifications)	13		Below level 4 (A levels, GCSE/O levels, other. No qualifications)	10
Unweighted base		205	Unweighted base		187

Source: NCTJ destination surveys, 2015 and 2019

Base is: all respondents

The data from the questionnaire has been linked to data which was obtained from the NCTJ's database which shows the qualification level achieved⁵, the nature of the course and the name and nature of the educational and training establishment that the individual attended. This information is used as analytical variables throughout the report. Of variables relating to the NCTJ qualification:

- the NCTJ database shows that 20 per cent had gained the diploma at the gold standard level, 38 per cent at the diploma level, whilst 42 per cent had taken the examinations but had not yet achieved a standard to attain the diploma;
- 19 per cent took the training leading to the NCTJ diploma as part of a master's course, 41 per cent as part of an undergraduate course, 14 per cent as part of a fast-track course, seven per cent as part of an academic year course, nine per cent on a part-time course and 10 per cent on an 'other' course; and
- 60 per cent undertook their training at a higher education institution, 14 per cent at a further education college and 26 per cent at a independent training provider.

These represent substantial changes from 2015. In terms of the proportions achieving at each of the qualification levels, there has been a doubling of the proportion gaining the 'diploma' standard (from 19 per cent to 38 per cent), with corresponding falls in the proportion qualifying at gold standard (28 to 20 per cent) and being classed as incompletes (53 to 42 per cent). There is also a higher proportion who have taken their diploma in a higher education institution (increased from 47 per cent to 60 per cent) and a decrease in those studying at a further education college (from 26 per cent to 14 per cent). Perhaps as a result of this, the proportion studying on an undergraduate course has increased from 20 per cent to 41 per cent.

Table 1.3: NCTJ diploma qualification characteristics

		2015	2019
		%	%
Qualification level			
	Gold standard	28	20
	Diploma	19	38
	Incomplete	53	42
Course type			
	Master's	26	19
	Undergraduate	20	41
	Fast-track	25	14
	Academic year	19	7
	Part-time	6	9
	Other	4	10
Provider type			
	Higher education	47	60
	Further education	26	14
	Private provider	27	26
Unweighted base		205	187

Source: NCTJ destination surveys, 2015 and 2019

Base is: all respondents

⁵ We also asked the individuals in the survey what their NCTJ qualification level was, but use for the analysis that from the database as we believe this to be more accurate.

Whilst the overall sample is robust and allows analysis, sample sizes can become low when the data is examined by the various sub-groups. We suggest, therefore, that care needs to be taken with some of the numbers shown in the report.

1.3.2 Three-year follow-up

The three-year follow-up research uses the same approach as that used by the UK's Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA) in their study *Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education: Longitudinal Survey*. As with the six-month follow-up, using the same methodology as this established survey gives us the advantages of being able to use the HESA data as a benchmark survey.

Using the same database of individuals that were contacted as part of the 2015 destinations research, we re-contacted all those individuals who had completed their course of study between May to October, 2015. We had contactable email addresses for 946 individuals, all of whom were contacted in March, again via email, asking them to complete an online survey. We achieved 134 responses, a response rate of 14 per cent.

As with the six-month follow-up, we weighted the responses received to reflect actual qualification attainment levels as recorded in the NCTJ's database. The appropriate control total is the total sample size, including those for whom we did not have a viable email address. This comes to 1,096, with proportions of 28 per cent who qualified at the gold standard.

Table 1.4: Proportions attaining different qualification levels, 2015 cohort

Qualification level	n	%
Gold standard	307	28
Diploma	208	19
Incomplete	581	53
Total	1,096	100

Source: NCTJ internal database

Throughout the report below we compare the findings from the three-year follow-up to the data from the latest HESA data available, the 2016/17 survey⁶, which contacted 2012/13 leavers. Again, it should be noted that the comparison is not an exact one. HESA's data is, by definition, those who have completed a higher education degree at an HE institution. The NCTJ's diploma is at level 3 and is delivered by a range of different education and training establishments, including HE institutions (where it may be delivered as part of a wider undergraduate course in journalism), FE colleges or independent training providers. However, the availability of the HESA data does give some context to that which we produce here and is therefore of value.

Throughout the report we use a number of descriptive variables to highlight trends in the data. In the main these relate to personal characteristics and details of the NCTJ qualification attained, including level of attainment, type of course and nature of educational and training establishment. In broad terms:

- Forty-two per cent of the respondents are male, 56 per cent female;
- the respondents are, as would be expected, older than from the six-months survey as they are three years further on in their careers. However, they are still in the early stages of their careers, with 70 per cent aged 30 and below. Twenty-three per cent are aged 30 – 44;
- the majority of the respondents are from white ethnic minority groups (93 per cent);
- six per cent of respondents have a health problem or disability that limits the type of work that they can do, 91 per cent do not; and
- the respondents are highly qualified with 41 per cent having a level 5 qualification (postgraduate level), 52 per cent to level 4 (undergraduate degree or equivalent) and with only eight per cent being qualified below degree level.

⁶ Available at <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/publications/long-destinations-2012-13>

Table 1.5: Personal characteristics, three-year follow-up

		2019
		%
Sex		
	Male	42
	Female	56
	Other	1
	Prefer not to say	2
Age		
	18 - 21	0
	22 - 24	6
	25 - 29	64
	30 - 44	23
	45 and over	6
	Prefer not to say	0
Ethnicity		
	White	93
	Non-white	7
	Prefer not to say	0
Disability		
	Yes	6
	No	91
	Prefer not to say	3
Qualification level		
	Level 5 (postgraduate qualification)	41
	Level 4 (undergraduate degree or equivalent)	52
	Below level 4 (A levels, GCSE/O levels, other. No qualifications)	8
Unweighted base		134

Source: NCTJ three-year follow-up destination survey, 2019

Base is: all respondents

The data from the questionnaire has been linked to data which was obtained from the NCTJ's database which shows the qualification level achieved⁷, the nature of the course and the name and nature of the educational and training establishment that the individual attended. This information is used as analytical variables throughout the report. Of variables relating to the NCTJ qualification:

⁷ We also asked the individuals in the survey what their NCTJ qualification level was, but use for the analysis that from the database as we believe this to be more accurate. The relationship between the NCTJ database qualification attainment level and the respondents is discussed in the methodology section in Annex 1.

- the NCTJ database shows that 30 per cent had gained the diploma at the gold standard level, 21 per cent at the diploma level, whilst 49 per cent had taken the examinations but had not yet achieved a standard to attain the diploma;
- Twenty-four per cent took the training leading to NCTJ diploma as part of a Master's course, 17 per cent as part of an undergraduate course, 29 per cent as part of a fast-track course, 16 per cent as part of an academic year course, five per cent on a part-time course and seven per cent on some 'other' course
- Forty-two per cent undertook their training at a HE institution, 27 per cent at a further education college and 31 per cent at a independent training provider.

Table 1.6: Qualification characteristics, three-year follow-up

		2019
		%
Qualification level		
	Gold standard	30
	Diploma	21
	Incomplete	49
Course type		
	Master's	24
	Undergraduate	17
	Fast-track	29
	Academic year	16
	Part-time	5
	Other	7
Provider type		
	Higher education	42
	Further education	27
	Independent provider	31
Unweighted base		

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2019

Base is: all respondents

1.4 Structure of the report

The remainder of the report is structured such that:

SECTION 2
presents the data
from the six-month
follow-up survey;

SECTION 3
presents the data
from the three-year
follow-up survey; and

SECTION 4
is a discussion of
the findings.

2 Six-month follow-up



2.1 Current activities of students

Eighty-six per cent were working as their main activity (or due to start work in the next month), with 76 per cent working full-time, eight per cent part-time and two per cent due to start work in the next month. Eight per cent were unemployed, with five per cent engaged in further study.

This employment rate is an increase on the 2015 results (where 82 per cent were working or due to start work).

Table 2.1: Current destination

	Main activity	
	2015	2019
	%	%
Working full-time	73	76
Working part-time	9	8
Due to start a job in the next month	*	2
Engaged in full-time further study, training or research	5	5
Engaged in part-time further study, training or research	*	0
Taking time out in order to travel	1	0
Unemployed	9	8
Doing something else (eg retired, looking after home or family)	2	*
Base (n)	205	187

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2015

Base = all respondents

Notes: working includes self-employed/freelance, voluntary or unpaid work or an internship or placement

This 86 per cent employment rate is higher than that which is reported for all HE leavers in 2016/17 by HESA⁸, which found that 75 per cent of all graduates were in work either in the UK or overseas, four per cent were unemployed (lower than the eight per cent for NCTJ students) and 18 per cent were engaged in further study (compared to five per cent of NCTJ students). This comparison is intuitively what would be expected: the NCTJ diploma is a vocationally-based qualification and it would be expected that the 'natural' destination on completion of it would be a job and not further study.

⁸ NCTJ analysis of HESA data. HESA data described in: *Higher Education Leavers Statistics, 2016/17*, ONS Statistical First Release, 2018

There are some notable variations in the propensity to be in work, in that:

- the 'higher' the level of NCTJ qualification attained, the more likely it is that the individual will be in employment. Ninety-three per cent of those with the gold standard are in employment of some kind (or due to start in the next month), compared to 85 per cent of those who have achieved the diploma standard and 84 per cent of those for whom the diploma is incomplete;
- those who studied on a master's, fast-track or part-time course are most likely to be working; and
- those who studied at an independent training provider are most likely to be employed (with 97 per cent working), compared to 85 per cent of those who studied at a HE institution and 69 per cent of those who studied at an FE college. Again, this is intuitively what would be expected: those that are studying at an independent provider are more likely to have been sponsored by an employer and already employed through the duration of the course.

Table 2.2: Variations in destinations

		Working (%)	Studying (%)	Unemployed/ other (%)	Unweighted base (n)
All		86	5	8	187
Qualification level					
	Gold standard	93	6	2	53
	Diploma	85	5	9	79
	Incomplete	84	5	11	55
Course type					
	Master's	91	3	7	37
	Undergraduate	83	7	11	72
	Fast track	89	5	5	30
	Academic year	74	19	7	16
	Part-time	100	0	0	15
	Other	84	0	17	17
Nature of centre					
	Higher education	85	5	10	110
	Further education	69	10	22	26
	Independent provider	97	3	0	51

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2019

Unweighted base = 187

Notes: working includes those working full or part-time, or those about to start a job in the next month, studying includes those engaged in study full or part-time. Other includes those who are travelling or retired, looking after the family, etc

2.2 Nature of employment

The 82 per cent of respondents who had a job (or were due to start a job in the next month) were asked details about that job⁹.

Journalism-related employment

Seventy-six per cent of those had a full or part-time job, or were due to start a job in the next month, stated that this job was journalism-related. Twenty-four per cent stated that their job was not journalism-related. This is a decrease in the proportion of those who are working in a journalism-related job.

Table 2.3: Whether job is journalism-related

	2015	2019
	%	%
Job is journalism-related	79	76
Job is non journalism related	21	24
Base (n)	182	159

Source: NCTJ destination surveys, 2015 and 2019

Base = all respondents who have a job

Notes: working includes self-employed/freelance, voluntary or unpaid work or an internship or placement

The extent to which the job is journalism-related varies such that:

- Ninety per cent of those who had achieved the gold standard were working in a journalism-related job, compared to 78 per cent of those who had attained the diploma level and 67 per cent of those who did not complete the diploma;
- those who had done a fast-track or academic year course had the highest journalism-related employment rates (both 93 per cent); and
- Eighty-seven per cent of those who studied at an FE college had a journalism-related job, as did 86 per cent from independent providers, compared to 69 per cent who studied at a HE institution.

⁹ Respondents who had more than one job (of which there were 18 per cent) were asked to provide details of what they considered to be their main job – either the one where they spent most time or the one which paid them the most money.

Table 2.4: Whether the job is journalism-related

	Job is journalism-related %	Job is non journalism related %	Base (n)
All	76	24	159
NCTJ qualification level			
Gold standard	90	10	49
Diploma	78	22	65
Incomplete	67	33	45
Course type			
Master's	79	21	32
Undergraduate	64	36	58
Fast-track	93	7	28
Academic year	93	7	12
Part-time	83	17	15
Other	77	23	14
Nature of centre			
Higher education	69	31	91
Further education	87	13	18
Independent provider	86	14	50

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2019

Unweighted base = all those who are working

Notes: working includes those working full or part-time, or those about to start a job in the next month

Those working in a journalism-related job were asked why they wanted to become a journalist. The reasons were varied but clustered into four broad groups. Thirty-three per cent of respondents wanted to become a journalist because of their interest in the subject area (eg sport, etc); 32 per cent did so because they enjoyed writing. Thirty per cent enjoy the nature of journalism, with 29 per cent believing that journalism was attractive because of the importance and significance of the role.

Table 2.5: Reasons for wanting to become a journalist

	%
Interest/enjoyment of the subject	33
Enjoyment of writing	32
Nature of the job	30
To tell important stories significant or important job	29
Other	16
Not answered	10
Base (n)	159

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2019

Base = all respondents who are working in a journalism-related job

Notes: working includes self-employed/freelance, voluntary or unpaid work or an internship or placement

Multiple responses allowed so will total more than 100

The actual words of the respondents give a deeper understanding of the motivations for becoming a journalist than is conveyed in the ‘codes’ presented above. We show below examples given by the respondents: as can be seen, these often cover more than one reason, but if we look at those who cite an interest in, or an enjoyment of the subject:

‘A love of arts and culture and wanting to review events, interview, write features and news.’

‘I love news.’

‘I have a real interest in football and wanted to share opinions about the sport. I felt journalism was a great way for me to do this.’

For those who enjoy writing, journalism is seen as a way of continuing this into their work:

‘I enjoy writing and love fashion so I thought it would be a good idea to put them together and express my creative flair.’

‘I have enjoyed writing since a young age and decided I wanted to see my writing in print.’

‘I always felt like it was a good path for me as I am a born storyteller.’

For some, it's the nature of the job:

'Exciting job, every day is different.'

'I enjoy the diversity of day-to-day life and the vast range of topics you could be asked to write about.'

'I enjoy working in a fast-paced environment which is always changing. Plus, it's just damn good fun!'

'I'm incredibly nosy and I always want to know what's going on, so I thought I may as well make it a job.'

Whilst others see the importance of journalism in a functioning society:

'To tell the stories of people whose voices would otherwise go unheard.'

'I wanted to tell the stories of those who often go under the radar, find the extraordinary things that "ordinary" people are doing and, hopefully, help their causes if I can.'

'I wanted to become a sports reporter and create stories. I wanted to give grassroots sport a platform and the exposure it deserves.'

Job title

Fifty-seven per cent of those working in journalism-related jobs were working as writers or reporters, 12 per cent in PR and communications, nine per cent in editorial management and eight per cent as broadcast reporters.

This distribution is similar to that found in 2015

Table 2.6: Title of journalism role

	2015	2019
	%	%
General management	1	0
Editorial management	13	9
Section heads	1	0
Writers & reporters (newspaper and magazines)	55	57
Broadcast reporters	11	8
Production (including photographers)	4	6
PR and communications	14	12
Other	4	8
Unweighted base	145	125

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2015

Base = all those working in a journalism capacity

Notes: working includes self-employed/freelance, voluntary or unpaid work or an internship or placement plus those about to start a job in the next month

We can usefully compare this distribution to the occupational distribution of all journalists discussed in the *Journalists at Work* research¹⁰. If we compare with the distribution of 'journalism only' jobs for the diploma students, we can see that relatively fewer are in editorial management or section-head roles (nine per cent compared to 30 per cent of all journalists) and more are employed as writers and reporters (57 per cent compared to 52 per cent of all journalists). This reflects that the diploma cohorts are relatively new entrants to work and as yet have not progressed to more senior levels with managerial responsibility. There is also a striking difference in the proportion of the recent NCTJ diploma students who are engaged in PR and communications at 12 per cent, compared to the less than one per cent found in the *Journalists at Work* survey.

¹⁰ *Journalists at Work, 2018*, National Council for the Training of Journalists

Table 2.7: Occupation of those in employment

	NCTJ destination distribution of journalism jobs	JaW 2018 distribution
	%	%
General management	0	1
Editorial management	9	19
Section heads	0	10
Writers & reporters (newspaper and magazines)	57	52
Broadcast reporters	8	4
Production (including photographers)	6	9
PR and communications	12	*
Other	8	11

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2019 (unweighted base = 125) and Journalists at Work, 2018 (unweighted base = 881)

Note: JaW allowed multiple responses so the percentages total more than 100%

We have also examined the occupations of those who are not working in a journalism role. The highest proportion (56 per cent) are working in associate professional and technical occupations, with a further 15 per cent in professional occupations. This concentration in these higher-level occupations is more pronounced than in 2015.

Table 2.8: Occupation of those in non-journalism employment

	2015	2019
	%	%
Professional occupations	23	15
Associate professional and technical occupations	32	56
Administrative and secretarial occupations	22	5
Skilled trade occupations	0	4
Caring, leisure and other service occupations	6	0
Sales and customer service occupations	12	16
Process, plant and machine operatives	4	0
Elementary administration and service occupations	2	3
Base	37	33

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2015 and 2019

Base = all those working but not in a journalism-related job

Notes: working includes self-employed/freelance, voluntary or unpaid work or an internship or placement plus those about to start a job in the next month

Many of these associate professional and technical jobs relate to marketing, particularly in the digital sphere, with examples of jobs being:

'Digital marketing'

'Analysis of business processes and coordination of development of digital services'

'I am a copywriter and write product description for an e-commerce in 5 foreign languages'

'Account manager for a leading cosmetic brand'

'Primarily a copywriter, although do some work interrogating data to tell stories about football, although I stress that I don't consider it to be journalism.'

'I'm the digital marketing executive for multiple pharmaceutical companies'

'Digital marketing, so seo content production, ppc, social media management, graphic design, copywriting and copy editing'

Sector

The sector of those in employment shows that overall just over two thirds (68 per cent) are working in the creative media sectors – 27 per cent in newspapers, 15 per cent in magazines, four per cent in television, four per cent in radio, 13 per cent in an online/digital sector and four per cent in the PR and corporate communications sector. Just less than a third (32 per cent) are working in other sectors of the economy.

The distribution shows some changes from the sector of jobs in the 2015 research, though these are relatively small. There has been a decline in the proportion who have found jobs in the newspaper sector (from 30 per cent to 27 per cent), an increase in the proportion working in the online or digital sector (nine to 13 per cent) and an increase in the proportion working in the magazine sector (11 to 15 per cent).

Table 2.9: Sector of employment

		2015	2019
		%	%
Newspapers		30	27
	Regional or local newspaper	24	18
	National newspaper	6	9
Magazines		11	15
	Business magazines	6	7
	Consumer/leisure magazines	3	4
	Other magazines	2	4
Radio		4	4
	Regional or local radio	2	3
	National radio	2	1
Television		7	4
	National TV	3	3
	Regional TV	1	0
	Cable/satellite TV	3	1
Online/Digital company		9	13
Public relations and corporate communications company		6	4
Rest of the economy		35	32
	Manufacturing	1	0
	Wholesale and retail trade	4	7
	Accommodation and food services	1	2
	Information and communication	6	9
	Financial and insurance activities	2	1
	Professional and scientific activities	4	1
	Administration and support activities	2	1
	Public administration and defence	1	2
	Education	5	3
	Human health and social work	6	1
	Arts, entertainment and recreation	2	0
	Other service activities	1	0
	Other	2	2
Unweighted base		180	146

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2015 and 2019

Base = all those working

Notes: working includes self-employed/freelance, voluntary or unpaid work or an internship or placement plus those about to start a job in the next month

To understand this further, Table 2.10 below shows how this distributes further according to whether the respondent's job is journalism-related or not, such that:

- of those working in journalism-related jobs, 82 per cent are working in the creative media sectors, with over a third (38 per cent) being in newspapers and 20 per cent in magazines. However, this still leaves 18 per cent of those in journalism-related jobs working in the wider economy, not in a 'traditional' media sector;
- of those not working in journalism-related jobs, 20 per cent are working in the creative media sectors (particularly in the online/digital sector, with 10 per cent), and 80 per cent elsewhere across the economy.

Table 2.10: Sector of employment

		All	Journalism-related jobs	Non-journalism-related jobs
		%	%	%
Newspapers		27	36	0
	Regional or local newspaper	18	24	0
	National newspaper	9	12	0
Magazines		15	20	4
	Business magazines	7	8	4
	Consumer/leisure magazines	4	6	0
	Other magazines	4	6	0
Radio		4	5	0
	Regional or local radio	3	4	0
	National radio	1	1	0
Television		4	5	0
	National TV	3	4	0
	Regional TV	0	0	0
	Cable/satellite TV	1	1	0
Online/Digital company		13	14	10
Public relations and corporate communications company		4	3	5
Rest of the economy		32	18	80
	Manufacturing	0	0	0
	Wholesale and retail trade	7	0	30
	Accommodation and food services	2	0	9
	Information and communication	9	8	12
	Financial and insurance activities	1	1	3
	Professional and scientific activities	1	2	3

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2015 and 2019

Base = all those working

Notes: working includes self-employed/freelance, voluntary or unpaid work or an internship or placement plus those about to start a job in the next month

Table 2.10: Sector of employment (continued)

		All	Journalism-related jobs	Non-journalism-related jobs
		%	%	%
Rest of the economy				
	Administration and support activities	1	0	6
	Public administration and defence	2	3	0
	Education	3	2	9
	Human health and social work	1	1	0
	Arts, entertainment and recreation	0	0	0
	Other service activities	0	0	0
	Other	2	2	6
Unweighted base		146	117	29

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2015 and 2019 • Base = all those working

Notes: working includes self-employed/freelance, voluntary or unpaid work or an internship or placement plus those about to start a job in the next month

2.3 Nature of contract

The majority of respondents (68 per cent) who were working were in a permanent or open-ended contract, with nine per cent on a fixed-term contract of a year or longer. Seventeen per cent were self-employed.

The changes in the data show movements in different directions. A higher proportion are on permanent, open-ended contracts (68 per cent compared to 58 per cent) and, at the same time, there is also a higher proportion who are self-employed/freelance (from 12 per cent to 17 per cent).

Table 2.11: Nature of job contract

	2015	2019
	%	%
On a permanent or open-ended contract	58	68
On a fixed term contract lasting 12 months or longer	13	9
On a fixed term contract lasting less than 12 months	7	4
Self-employed or freelance	12	17
In charge of your own company	1	0
Voluntary work	3	1
On an internship/placement	4	2
Temping	2	0
Other	0	1
Base	180	159

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2015 • Unweighted base = 186

Notes: all those working, which includes self-employed/freelance, voluntary or unpaid work or an internship or placement plus those about to start a job in the next month

HESA data shows that for all graduates across the UK, the proportion on permanent (or open-ended contracts) was 63 per cent – lower than the NCTJ diploma graduates at 68 per cent. The proportion self-employed or starting their own business was also lower at six per cent (compared to 17 per cent). Higher proportions (21 per cent) are on fixed-term contracts, compared to 13 per cent of our NCTJ diploma respondents.

2.4 Salary

The pay that people are receiving for their main job varies between those who are unpaid (one per cent), through to eight per cent who were earning more than £30,000. The median level of pay is £22,500.

As would be expected, salaries have increased between 2015 and 2019. In 2015, 71 per cent were paid less than £20,000: in 2019 this had decreased to 49 per cent. The median pay has increased from £17,500 to the £22,500 found in the 2019 research.

Comparable data for HESA of those who have found work following a first degree suggests that the median level of pay for these graduates is slightly lower at £22,000. If we take the mid-point of the NCTJ destination survey as being £22,500, it suggests the median level of pay for those with an NCTJ diploma is some £500 more than the overall ‘graduate’ average.

Of course, salaries of other graduates are not the only relevant comparator. Across all jobs in the entire economy it is estimated that the annual median salary is £34,966¹¹, which is considerably higher than those being paid to the new journalists graduating with the NCTJ diploma.

Table 2.12: Earnings for main job

	2015	2019
	%	%
Unpaid	3	1
Less than £10,000	19	6
£10,000 – £14,999	11	13
£15,000 – £19,999	38	26
£20,000 – £24,999	17	30
£25,000 – £29,999	8	15
£30,000 plus	4	9
Average (median)	£17,500	£22,500
Base	169	159

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 174

Notes: all those working full or part-time

¹¹ Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, ONS, 2018:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/datasets/regionbyoccupation4digitsoc2010ashtable15>

2.5 Region of work

As would be expected, the respondents show a location of work that is skewed towards London and the South East – with just below half (45 per cent) located there. The distribution has changed very little since 2015.

This distribution shows a similar distribution to that found for all journalists in the *Journalists at Work* research, which suggested that 33 per cent of all journalists were working in London and 15 per cent in the South East.

Table 2.13: Place of work

		2015	2019
		%	%
In the UK		93	97
	London	31	33
	South east	15	12
	South west	4	5
	West Midlands	6	1
	East Midlands	2	3
	East/East Anglia	3	1
	Yorkshire & Humberside	6	3
	North west	11	14
	North	6	3
	Scotland	6	15
	Wales	2	4
	Northern Ireland	5	1
Not in the UK		7	3
Base		180	149

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2015 and 2019

Notes: base is those working full or part-time or due to start work in the next month

This skew is more pronounced for journalism-related jobs – with 49 per cent of jobs located in London and the south east compared to 41 per cent of non-journalism related jobs.

Table 2.14: Place of work by journalism and non-journalism jobs

		All	Journalism-related job	Non-journalism-related job
		%	%	%
In the UK		97	98	95
	London	33	35	28
	South east	12	14	13
	South west	5	3	13
	West Midlands	1	1	3
	East Midlands	3	2	6
	East/East Anglia	1	1	3
	Yorkshire & Humberside	3	4	0
	North west	14	14	16
	North	3	4	0
	Scotland	15	15	13
	Wales	4	5	0
	Northern Ireland	1	1	0
Not in the UK		3	2	5
Base		149		

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2019

Notes: base is those working full or part-time or due to start work in the next month

2.6 Reason why taken the job

The majority of those working decided to take the job that they were doing because it was the type of job that they wanted and fitted into their career plan. Looking at ‘any reason’ (where respondents give more than one response) 72 per cent stated that they took the job because it was the type of job that they wanted, 52 per cent stated that it was the best job offer they received and 44 per cent that they took it to gain and broaden their experience in order for them to get the type of job that they wanted. But when allowed more than one response, respondents also answer more ‘practical’ reasons: 45 per cent mentioned the job being in the right location.

Looking at the main reason (where respondents are allowed to only give one answer), the majority give responses which align to career development: 48 per cent say that it was because it was the type of job that they wanted and 16 per cent that it would give experience that would lead to the type of job that they really want. However, significant minorities appear to have less choice, or to have been pushed in this direction: eight per cent said they took the job in order to earn a living/pay off debts and five per cent said it was the only job offer they received.

These responses are very similar to those gained in 2015, with little change in the absolute level of responses, nor the ordering.

Table 2.15: Reason for taking the job

	2015		2019	
	Any reason	Main reason	Any reason	Main reason
	%	%	%	%
It was the type of job that I wanted/fitted into my career plan	72	53	72	48
To gain and broaden my experience in order to get the type of job I really want	40	12	44	16
It was the best job offer I received	37	8	52	13
In order to earn a living/pay off debts	29	8	29	8
It was the only job offer I received	24	6	16	5
It was an opportunity to progress in the organisation	26	5	35	4
To see if I would like the type of work it involved	26	3	34	3
The job was well paid	22	2	28	2
It was in the right location	45	4	45	1
Base	180	180	157	157

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015 and 2019

Notes: all those working or about to start work in the next month

The data from HESA suggests that the main reason 48 per cent of leavers from HE who were working took their job was because it fitted into their career plan, with 12 per cent saying that it allowed them to gain and broaden their experience. Thirteen per cent stated that it was to earn a living or pay off debts. These reasons are similar to the ones generated from the NCTJ diploma students.

There are variations in this data, in that higher proportions of those that had completed the diploma stated that the main reason they took the job was because it was the type of job they wanted: (59 per cent of those who achieved the gold standard and 57 per cent of those achieving the diploma, compared to 32 per cent of those yet to complete); and

When we examine the main reason for taking the job by the nature of the job, we can see that those who are in journalism-related jobs are more likely to have taken the jobs for career reasons – 57 per cent of those in journalism-related jobs say that it was the type of job that they wanted or fitted into a career plan, compared to 15 per cent of those in a non-journalism related jobs. Conversely, those in non-journalism jobs were more likely to give other responses: 36 per cent that it was to earn a living/pay off debts (compared to one per cent of those in journalism-related jobs).

Table 2.16: Main reason for taking the job by whether job is journalism-related

	All	Job is journalism related	Job not journalism related
	%	%	%
It was the type of job that I wanted/fitted into my career plan	48	57	15
To gain and broaden my experience in order to get the type of job I really want	16	15	14
It was the best job offer I received	13	15	11
In order to earn a living/pay off debts	8	1	36
It was the only job offer I received	5	6	5
It was an opportunity to progress in the organisation	4	5	0
To see if I would like the type of work it involved	3	0	11
The job was well paid	2	0	8
It was in the right location	1	1	0
Base	157	112	28

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2019

Unweighted base = 157

Notes: all those working or about to start work in the next month

2.7 Finding employment and the role of internships

The ways in which individuals found out about the job they are doing (or are just about to start) are varied, with no single means dominating. Twenty-five per cent stated that it was via a recruitment agency or website, 23 per cent via social media/professional networking sites and 18 per cent because of personal contacts (including family and friends).

Compared to the 2015 data, the importance of social media/professional networking sites has increased in importance, with 23 per cent saying this was how they found out about their job in 2019 compared to 11 per cent in 2015. The proportion who stated that they had already worked there halved from 20 per cent in 2015 to 10 per cent in 2019.

The HESA data for all HE leavers shows that the most common way of finding their job was via a recruitment agency or website (20 per cent), through having already worked there, including on an internship (19 per cent), 17 per cent via an employer's website and 16 per cent via personal contacts (including family and friends).

Table 2.17: Finding out about the job

	2015	2019
	%	%
Recruitment agency/website	27	25
Social media/professional networking sites	11	23
Personal contacts, including family and friends	21	18
Employer's website	6	12
Already worked there (including on an internship/placement)	20	10
The university/college careers service	6	7
Other university/college source	4	6
Media (newspaper/magazine advertisement)	11	5
Speculative application	2	3
Other	11	10
Base	180	159

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2015 and 2019 • Unweighted bases = 186 and 146

Notes: all those working or about to start work in the next month. More than one response allowed so percentages will total more than 100%

As we can see from this, a tenth had stated that they found their jobs because they had worked for their current employer before. To explore this further all those in work were asked whether they had worked for their current employer before or during their NCTJ course. Seventy-seven per cent had not worked for their current employer before, with the remaining 23 per cent having done so at some point, either before the NCTJ course (six per cent), during (14 per cent) or both before and during (four per cent).

There is little change in this data between the 2015 and 2019 data.

Table 2.18: Whether had worked for the current employer before

	2015	2019
	%	%
Yes, before my NCTJ course	6	6
Yes, during my NCTJ course	11	14
Yes, both before and during my NCTJ course	7	4
No	77	77
Base	180	159

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015 and 2019 • Unweighted bases = 186 & and 146

Notes: all those working or about to start work in the next month

Those who had worked for their employer previously were further asked the ways in which they had worked for that employer. The most common (65 per cent) is that it was full or part-time work all year round, which has increased considerably since 2015. Only a minority (four per cent) stated that they had been on an internship, which is a considerable decrease on the 2015 data. This is a result which does not sit easily with anecdotal views of working in journalism, nor with evidence from the 2018 *Journalists at Work* research. It seems that in this case, respondents are conflating the various types of work with ‘internships’.

Table 2.19: Ways in which worked for employer before or during the NCTJ course

	2015	2019
	%	%
On a sandwich placement	2	7
On another kind of placement or project work	37	6
As a holiday job	2	0
Full or part-time work all year round	35	65
Full or part-time work during term time	4	8
On an internship	23	4
In other ways	15	14
Base	43	33

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2015 and 2019

Base = all those working and who stated that they had worked for the current employer before or during their NCTJ course

2.8 Role of NCTJ qualification in gaining employment

The NCTJ diploma was needed by 48 per cent of the respondents, with 17 per cent stating that it was a formal requirement to get the job that they are doing and 31 per cent that, whilst it was not a formal requirement, it gave the respondent an advantage. Fifty-two per cent stated that it was not required for the job that they are doing.

As might be expected, this varies considerably as to whether the job was journalism-related or not. Of those in a journalism-related job, 60 per cent stated that it was a requirement (22 per cent a necessity, 38 per cent an advantage). Of the non-journalism related jobs, 91 per cent stated that the NCTJ diploma was not required, with nine per cent stating that it gave an advantage.

This data represents a considerable change since 2015, where it seems that the NCTJ diploma is losing some traction in the employment market. The proportion who say that it is required in their job has fallen from 61 per cent to 48 per cent and, even amongst journalism-related jobs, from 77 per cent to 60 per cent.

Table 2.20: Role of the NCTJ qualification in gaining employment

	2015			2019		
	All	Journalism related job	Non-journalism related job	All	Journalism related job	Non-journalism related job
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Required: formal requirement by the employer	29	37	0	17	22	0
Required: not a formal requirement, but gave an advantage	32	40	4	31	38	9
Not required	39	24	96	52	40	91
Base	180	142	38	159	125	34

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2015 and 2019

Base is those working full or part-time or due to start work in the next month

The comparable data from the HESA survey suggests that for all UK HEI leavers that were in employment, 44 per cent stated that the qualification was a formal requirement, 24 per cent that it was not a formal requirement but gave an advantage, and 32 per cent that it was not required.

This is an interesting finding: if we consider the entire NCTJ destination sample, it suggests that the NCTJ diploma is required at a lower level to the HE qualification (68 per cent say their HE qualification was required compared to 48 per cent the NCTJ). However, if we consider only those who are working in a journalism-related job, we see that the proportions saying the qualifications were required is similar (68 per cent compared to 60 per cent).

Although somewhat hypothetical, those who had said that the NCTJ diploma was required were asked what, as far as they were aware, was most important to their employer about the NCTJ qualification. By far the most common answer (62 per cent) was 'the skills gained whilst studying for the qualification'.

Table 2.21: Aspects of the NCTJ qualification most valued by the employer

	2015	2019
	%	%
The skills gained whilst I was studying for the qualification	60	62
The subject studied	13	11
The level of study	6	7
Sandwich/work experience gained as part of the course	4	5
No one thing was most important	16	9
Don't know	1	6
Base	111	81

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2015 and 2019

Base is all those working and who stated that the NCTJ qualification was needed to get the job they were doing and who stated that the NCTJ qualification was necessary to get the job they are doing

The HESA data suggests that 46 per cent of all HE leavers believed that the aspect of most importance to their employer was the subject studied, 26 per cent that it was the level of study, 10 per cent that it was the sandwich/work experience gained as part of the course, with 18 per cent saying that no one thing was most important¹².

2.9 Activities of those not in employment

As we have seen above, the majority of respondents were in work. There were, however, a minority who were not in work and in this section, we examine what these people were doing.

It should be noted that the sample sizes of the various sub-groups here can be very small (indeed, only the sample of those who are in education and unemployed is of a reasonable size). Care needs to be taken when interpreting and putting reliance on this data.

2.9.1 Current activities of those not in work

Of those not in work:

- the 18 per cent whose main activity was full-time or part-time education were most likely to be doing a higher degree (62 per cent), with 22 per cent studying for an undergraduate degree. The subject matter is mainly journalism or writing-related (60 per cent) with 40 per cent studying a non-journalism related subject.
- the eight per cent who were unemployed were all (100 per cent) looking for work at the time of the survey.

2.9.2 Job search activities of the unemployed

The unemployed respondents were asked about their journalism-related job search activity since completing the NCTJ diploma course. The average number of jobs applied for is 19 (an increase on the 2015 level), but the majority of these people (71 per cent) had not been offered any journalism-related jobs at all since taking their examinations. Those that had been offered work had taken temporary jobs which had now ended.

Table 2.22: Job search activities of the unemployed

		2015	2019
Average number of jobs applied for (median)		15 jobs	19 jobs
		%	%
Whether been offered any journalism-related jobs			
Yes		10	29
No		90	71
Base		22	13

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2015 • Unweighted base = 17

Notes: all those currently unemployed

¹¹ This is not an exact comparison with HESA as we introduced the 'skills gained' response as part of our questionnaire (having found in the Journalists at Work survey that this an important feature for employers).

These respondents note a number of barriers to finding work, which include a lack of work experience:

‘Don’t have experience, can’t get job, can’t get experience because don’t have a job.’

‘Lack of experience gained whilst at University and also after. Most jobs ask for minimum 3 years’ experience but rarely count the experience gained at University as relevant experience no matter how much I try to persuade them that it is relevant.’

‘Lack of experience’

Some cite a lack of specific skills, particularly driving skills:

‘Not being able to drive.’

‘I am also focused on passing my driving test because this will open up more independency for me.’

The London-centric nature of the sector is also mentioned, particularly linked to the need for unpaid internships:

‘Everything is in London, can’t afford to work for free in an unpaid internship, family not middle class enough.’

‘Industry is too London-centric. Lack of jobs available where I live.’

2.9.3 Nature of future employment looked for

In this section, because of small sample numbers, we have added together the responses of all those who intend to look for work in the future. We can see that the majority (77 per cent) still intend to seek a journalism-related job. Twenty-three per cent will not be doing so. This broadly reflects the employment distribution of those who have found work (discussed in Section 2.2 above) – there is no indication that those who are not in work have been in any sense ‘discouraged’ from trying to become a journalist. The 2019 data is broadly similar to that found in 2015.

Table 2.23: Whether will be seeking a journalism-related job

	2015	2019
	%	%
Seeking/will seek a journalism-related job	72	77
Not seeking/will seek a journalism related	28	23
Base	47	26

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2015 and 2019

Base is all not in employment, unweighted bases = 47 & 26

Notes: all those in education, currently travelling, unemployed and doing something else at the time of the survey

The journalism jobs being sought are mainly writers and reporters (67 per cent) or broadcast reporters.

Table 2.24: Occupation of job being sought

	2015	2019
	%	%
Journalism-related jobs	72	77
General management	0	0
Editorial management	2	0
Section heads	0	0
Writers & reporters (newspaper and magazines)	39	67
Broadcast reporters	20	10
Production (including photographers)	2	5
PR and communications	7	0
Other	4	0
Non journalism-related jobs	28	23
Base	47	26

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2015 and 2019

Base is all those not in employment. Unweighted bases = 47 & 26

Notes: all those in education, currently travelling, unemployed and doing something else at the time of the survey

2.10 Learning activities since starting employment

2.10.1 Extent of learning activities

Since starting employment, 43 per cent had taken part in a learning activity¹³ related to their job, with 57 per cent not having done so. This is an increase on the proportion (36 per cent) of those who had undertaken learning in the 2015 survey.

¹³ This was defined so that it included taught courses, evening classes, supervised training whilst doing their job and learning on the job

Table 2.25: Whether undertaken learning activities since starting employment

	2015	2019
	%	%
Yes, have undertaken learning activities	36	43
No, no learning activities undertaken	64	57
Base	176	159

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2015 and 2019

Base = all those working

There are almost no variations in this 43 per cent who had undertaken learning activities, except that those in journalism-related jobs are less likely to have undertaken a learning activity than those that are in non-journalism related jobs (39 and 56 per cent respectively). This seems intuitively plausible – the individuals have been trained as journalists and therefore those working as journalists are less likely to have received training than those who are working in non-journalists' jobs for which their NCTJ training may not have been so directly applicable. On this basis, the increase in the proportion receiving training would also be consistent with the trend towards a higher proportion working in non-journalists jobs and in non-traditional media sectors.

2.10.2 Nature of learning activities

The main areas that the learning activity covered were professional skills (74 per cent), personal development (39 per cent), technical aspects (37 per cent), IT (26 per cent) and health and safety (25 per cent). Relatively few had undertaken training in business or management (12 per cent).

Table 2.26: Nature of learning activities

	2015	2019
	%	%
Professional skills	65	74
Personal development	38	39
Technical (new equipment/ machinery)	23	37
Information technology	27	26
Health and safety	16	25
Business/management	0	12
Other	18	1
Base	63	64

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2015 and 2019

Base = all those working and who have undertaken some learning activities since starting work

Note: multiple responses so percentage total more than 100%

This learning activity was mainly paid for by the employer (67 per cent), with 20 per cent saying that it had been supplied free, with no costs involved. This data has not shown any major changes since 2015.

Table 2.27: Paying for the learning activities

	2015	2019
	%	%
Your employer	66	67
You personally	7	10
Your family	4	0
Grant from body/trust	2	3
Supplied free – no costs involved	18	20
Other	4	0
Base	63	64

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2015 and 2019

Unweighted base = 68 & 64

Notes: all those working and who have undertaken some learning activities since starting work

Generally, the learning activity has been of a short duration. Ten per cent said that it had only been for one day, six per cent that it had been for two days and 42 per cent that it had been for 3-5 days. There are, however, just over a quarter who stated that they had received more substantial training input – 27 per cent stated that they had received more than 10 days training. The average (median) number of days training received was four, just less than the average found in 2015 (five days).

Table 2.28: Length of learning activities

	2015	2019
	%	%
1 day	17	10
2 days	22	6
3 – 5 days	30	42
6 – 10 days	9	15
More than 10 days	24	27
Average (median)	5 days	4 days
Base	60	64

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2015

Base = all those working and who have undertaken some learning activities since starting work

In the main, the learning was considered necessary to tailor the skills of the individual to the specific needs of the employer (42 per cent), to which could be added the 35 per cent who stated that the training as necessary to address specific skills issues which were only relevant to their employer. Sixteen per cent stated that the training was to raise skill levels to a higher level. Only a minority (seven per cent) stated that the training was necessary to fill gaps that the NCTJ diploma curriculum did not cover. These findings are broadly similar to those found in 2015.

Those that are working in non-journalism related jobs are more likely to state that the training was needed to meet specific employer needs. Again, this is plausible: those who have trained in a journalism-role and are now not working in such a role would have a greater need to develop alternative skills specific to their employers.

Table 2.29: Why the learning activities were necessary

	2015			2019		
	All	Journalism related jobs	Non-journalism related jobs	All	Journalism related jobs	Non-journalism related jobs
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Tailor your skills to the specific employer need	37	34	45	42	29	77
Address specific skills issues which are relevant only to your employer	22	17	36	35	44	10
Raise your skills to a higher level	29	35	14	16	17	13
Fill gaps that the NCTJ curriculum did not cover	12	15	4	7	10	0
Base	63	46	16	62	43	16

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2015

Base = all those working and who have undertaken some learning activities since starting work

2.11 Views on the NCTJ experience

The respondents were asked how well they thought that the NCTJ diploma had prepared them for work, for further study and for self-employment, freelance work or for starting their own business.

These questions were asked on a four-point scale, with an option given for respondents to decline (because the respondent does not know, or does not think that it is relevant to them). In presenting these results we re-base each question so that it is based only on those who could give a response and exclude the 'don't know/not relevant' responses. We also calculate a mean score based on the same four scores, where the higher score the better.

Whilst reading this section it may be useful to bear in mind that whilst individuals were specifically asked for their views of the 'qualification' it is clear from the responses that many individuals conflate the 'qualification' with the 'training' that has prepared them to sit the examination for the qualification. This is understandable: for the individual concerned the two activities are a single experience. It is only for central bodies (like the NCTJ) for whom there is a clear distinction between the 'qualification' (a single entity) and the 'training' (which will be a variety of different experiences). And indeed, one could argue, that since the NCTJ is responsible for accrediting the learning centres who deliver the training, then they should be accountable as much for the learning experience as for the qualification itself.

It is also perhaps worth bearing in mind that, as might be expected, attitudes to the value of a qualification may be directly linked to other factors, most notably success in the labour market.

2.11.1 Preparation for employment

Overall, 81 per cent of those who have taken the NCTJ diploma believe that it has prepared them well for employment, with 30 per cent stating that it had done so 'very well'. A fifth (20 per cent) stated that it had failed to do so. The average score is 3.0.

The satisfaction varies such that:

- the higher the attained NCTJ qualification, the more satisfied the individual. Ninety-two per cent of those who attained the gold standard felt that the NCTJ qualification had prepared them well for employment (48 per cent very well, 44 per cent well), leading to an average score of 3.4. The average scores for those who had attained the diploma level was 3.1, which drops to 2.8 for those who have yet to complete, where 25 per cent felt that it had not prepared them very well;
- those working in a journalism-related job rate the NCTJ qualification much more highly than those working in a non-journalism-related job. Eighty-five per cent of those in a journalism related job thought it prepared them well for work, compared to 74 per cent of those in a non-journalism related job, with average scores of 3.2 and 2.6 respectively.

Table 2.30: How well the NCTJ qualification prepared respondent for employment

	Very well (4)	Well (3)	Not very well (2)	Not at all (1)	Average score	Base
	%	%	%	%	n	n
All	30	51	12	8	3.0	136
NCTJ Qualification level						
Gold standard	48	44	8	0	3.4	48
Diploma	33	45	15	7	3.1	60
Incomplete	14	61	11	14	2.8	28
Course type						
Master's	48	37	13	3	3.3	28
Undergraduate	19	64	10	6	3.0	42
Fast-track	38	42	13	7	3.1	29
Academic year	60	15	25	0	3.4	12
Part-time and other	12	60	7	20	2.7	30
Nature of centre						
Higher education	31	53	11	5	3.1	68
Further education	23	44	11	22	2.7	20
Independent provider	30	50	13	6	3.1	43
Nature of job						
Journalism related job	37	48	12	3	3.2	97
Non-journalism related job	5	69	5	21	2.6	16

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2019 • Unweighted base = 136

Notes: all respondents

These levels of satisfaction are a slight increase on the satisfaction levels found in 2015, where 77 per cent believed that the NCTJ diploma had prepared them well for work, with an average score of 2.9. This is a result of two competing factors whereby (i) we have a greater proportion of people working in non-journalism jobs, which will have depressed the average overall rating scores and (ii) those in non-journalism jobs have rated the NCTJ diploma higher in 2019 than they did in 2015, which has increased the average score. We also see that the rating of HE courses has increased which, given the higher proportion of students studying for their diploma at a HE institution, will also have increased the ratings.

Table 2.31: How well the NCTJ qualification prepared respondent for employment

		Average score	
		2015 n	2019 n
All		2.9	3.0
NCTJ qualification level			
	Gold standard	3.4	3.4
	Diploma	3.1	3.1
	Incomplete	2.6	2.8
Course type			
	Master's	2.7	3.3
	Undergraduate	2.7	3.0
	Fast-track	3.1	3.1
	Academic year	3.2	3.4
	Part-time and other	2.8	2.7
Nature of centre			
	Higher education	2.7	3.1
	Further education	3.1	2.7
	Independent provider	3.0	3.1
Nature of job			
	Journalism related job	3.1	3.2
	Non-journalism related job	2.3	2.6

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2015

Base = all respondents

The HESA data suggests that leavers from all HE institutions give a similar rating for their courses, with an average score of 3.1. Eighty-two per cent stated that their course had prepared them well for employment, with 33 per cent saying that it had prepared them very well and 49 per cent well. Thirteen per cent stated that the course had not prepared them well and five per cent that it had not prepared them at all well.

Those who said that the diploma had prepared them well for employment were asked to give reasons why they said this and to outline the ways in which the diploma had prepared them well for employment. The most common reason (41 per cent) is that it gave the individuals skills for the workplace. Twenty-eight per cent mentioned the development of their reporting and journalism skills, 26 per cent noted the development of their legal knowledge and skills. It is interesting to note that 17 per cent explicitly mention (unprompted) the development of their shorthand skills.

Table 2.32: Reasons why the NCTJ diploma prepared the respondent well for employment

	2019
	%
Gives skills for the workplace	44
Reporting/journalism skills (including writing skills)	29
Legal knowledge/skills	26
Shorthand	17
A broad range of skills/ knowledge (unspecified)	6
Gives advantages/makes me stand out	4
Understanding of ethics	2
Other	6
Not answered	221
Unweighted Bases	112

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2019

Base = all respondents who thought that the NCTJ had prepared them well for employment

Note: multiple responses allowed so percentages will total more than 100%

The respondents gave examples of how the NCTJ diploma has helped them develop their employability, whether it was due to the development of skills:

'It taught me the practical skills I didn't know I was missing prior to studying. Journalism can often be as much of a science as it is an art – I wouldn't have been prepared for this without the NCTJ.'

'There are three main areas that the NCTJ helped a lot with in preparing me for being a local reporter. One is media law. The business cannot afford any legal action so it helps to know what I can and can't write before it gets published. Second is shorthand – it's a pain, but it helps when taking quotes over the phone, covering meetings and court cases. Third is news writing. I had a pretty good grasp of it before I did my NCTJ but the course sharpened my news writing to be more precise and quicker to write.'

Although, they may not be in the areas expected:

'I'm now a social media editor, but ironically, I use my sub-editing and essential journalism course skills the most (spelling, headlines, etc).'

And sometimes, the development is more regarding 'soft' skills and attributes rather than specific skills themselves:

'It gave me the confidence to take on a professional role as well as a portfolio I could show to employers.'

However, even these respondents who believed that the NCTJ diploma had prepared them well for employment noted room for improvement:

'However, it doesn't prepare you for the fast-paced nature of real-life journalism. There's no time to hesitate about making a call in real life. Tighter deadlines and more pressure during the qualification may have better prepared me.'

'I felt that the focus on print was a bit outdated and more emphasis should have been placed on online publication.'

'While the work placements were useful, I felt it was wrong for the tutors to encourage us to undertake unpaid work experience.'

'I think there were significant gaps that I filled in myself when it comes to digital journalism.'

The minority (a fifth) that said that the NCTJ qualification had failed to prepare them well for employment were asked why they thought this was the case. A number of these relate to the fact that the individual has failed to gain a job in journalism

'I don't have a job in the journalism industry despite applying to hundreds of positions in the last 12 months.'

'I didn't get a job in journalism.'

Others believed that the course content needed updating:

‘Things taught on course are mainly irrelevant and outdated.’

‘No applicable or transferable skills to what I do now’

‘The shorthand component (compulsory) is anachronistic and utterly pointless outside of newspaper journalism, and yet journalism itself is very broad subject. The module would have been better replaced with far more emphasis on digital and analytical skills’

2.11.2 Preparation for self-employment or starting your own business

More than half (54 per cent) of respondents did not feel able to give a view on the extent to which the NCTJ qualification had prepared them for self-employment. Of those that did feel able to give a response, 39 per cent of respondents stated that the diploma had prepared them well for self-employment or starting their own business, with 61 per cent that it had not.

There has been a substantial decrease in the proportion of respondents who feel that they have been well-prepared for self-employment: in 2015, 64 per cent thought that they had been well or very well prepared. As a result, the average score has decreased from 2.4 to 2.1.

Table 2.33: How well the NCTJ qualification prepared respondent for self-employment/freelance work or for starting own business

	Very well (4)	Well (3)	Not very well (2)	Not at all (1)	Average score	Base
2019	9	30	24	37	2.1	87
2015	5	55	20	21	2.4	121

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2015 • Unweighted base = 205

Notes: all respondents

The HESA scores suggest that leavers from all HE institutions rate their courses on a similar level to the NCTJ diploma in this aspect. Forty-one per cent of leavers from all HE institutions thought that their course had prepared them well (28 per cent) or very well (13 per cent) for self-employment or starting their own business, leading to an average rating of 2.2. Fifty-nine per cent believed that it had not done so, with 28 per cent saying ‘not very well’ and 31 per cent ‘not at all well’.

Those that said that the NCTJ qualification had failed to prepare them well for self-employment were asked why they thought this was the case. Thirty-nine per cent stated that it was due to a lack of information or help with being self-employed or freelance, 13 per cent that they needed advice or help with the administrative side of self-employment and 16 per cent that this was not covered at all.

Again, these issues do need to be seen in the context of the whole sample. On this basis, 24 per cent believe that there was not enough information given, 13 per cent that they needed help with administration and 10 per cent that nothing about this was covered on the course.

Table 2.34: Why the NCTJ qualification did not prepare well for self-employment/freelance work or for starting own business

	All respondents	Those who thought that the NCTJ diploma had not prepared them well for self-employment
	%	%
Not enough information/help with being freelance/self-employed	24	39
Need advice/help with the admin side (pitching/fees/accounts, etc)	13	20
Nothing about this was covered	10	16
Didn't provide information/help on running own business	5	9
I already freelanced/was self-employed/owned my own business	4	7
I don't currently freelance/am self-employed/own my own business	3	4
Other	4	5
No, none, nothing	1	2
Not answered/not relevant	54	27
Base	79	49

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2019

Notes: base is (i) all respondents and (ii) respondents who thought that the NCTJ qualification had failed to prepare them well for self-employment/freelance work or for starting their own business.

Multiple responses allowed so percentages will total more than 100%

2.12 Summary

Post-diploma destinations of students

Eighty-six per cent of those who had completed the NCTJ diploma course were in work at the time of the follow-up survey (or about to start a job very shortly). This is higher than (i) the comparable percentage in 2015 of 82 per cent and (ii) the 75 per cent of leavers from UK higher education courses across all subjects.

The higher the level of attainment of the NCTJ diploma, the more likely it is that the individual will be in employment – 93 per cent of those who attained the gold standard were in employment, compared to 85 per cent of those who attained the diploma standard and 84 per cent of those who did not complete their diploma.

Nature of employment

Seventy-six per cent of those that had a full-time or part-time job were in a journalism-related job, slightly lower than the 79 per cent in 2015. The likelihood of having gained a journalism-related job varies according to the level of qualification gained – those with gold standard were more likely to be in a journalism-related job (90 per cent) when compared to those who had the diploma level (78 per cent) and 67 per cent of those who did not complete their diploma.

The majority of respondents in work were engaged in the creative media sectors – 27 per cent in newspapers, 15 per cent in magazines, four per cent in television, four per cent in radio and 13 per cent in an online/digital sector. Just less than a third (32 per cent) are working in other sectors of the economy.

The majority (68 per cent) are in a permanent or open-ended contract, with a further nine per cent in a fixed-term contract of 12 months or more, with 17 per cent self-employed or freelance. Data from HESA suggests that fewer of the 'all graduate' population were on permanent contracts (63 per cent) and fewer were self-employed or freelance (six per cent).

The median salary for those working after their NCTJ diploma is £22,500, an increase on the median salary found in 2015 of £17,500. It is also slightly more than the comparable level for all HESA graduates of £22,000.

The NCTJ qualification was regarded as being 'required' by 48 per cent of all respondents (with 17 per cent that it was a formal requirement and 31 per cent that whilst it was not a formal requirement it was an advantage). This is a decrease on the levels found in 2015 (61 per cent) but this is consistent with (i) lower proportions being employed in journalism jobs and (ii) greater levels of employment across the economy and away from the 'traditional media' sectors. Amongst those in journalism jobs, 60 per cent stated that having the diploma was required, (22 per cent that it was a necessity and 38 per cent an advantage).

Activities of those not in employment

Only a relatively few respondents to the overall survey were not in some form of employment at the time of the research but, of these, the majority (77 per cent) intend looking for journalism-related work in the future.

Learning activities since starting employment

Forty-three per cent of those in work had undertaken some learning activities since starting work. In the main, this covered professional skills and was paid for by the employer. The average length of learning activities for those that had done some was four days.

The learning activity was mainly considered necessary to tailor skills to their specific employer needs, raise skills to a higher level or address specific, employer-related skills issues. Only a minority (seven per cent) stated that the training was necessary to fill gaps that the NCTJ curriculum did not cover.

Views on the NCTJ experience

In the main, those who have completed the NCTJ diploma believe that it prepares them well for what they choose to do next. Eighty-one per cent state that it has prepared them well for employment, and 39 per cent that it had prepared them well for self-employment or starting their own business. These ratings are at a very similar level to those found by HESA to HE courses across all subjects.

The six-month survey has shown that, in terms of employment:

- Eighty-six per cent of those who had completed the NCTJ diploma course/examinations were in work at the time of the follow-up survey. This is higher than the 75 per cent of leavers from UK higher education courses across all subjects.
- The higher the level of attainment of the NCTJ diploma, the more likely it is that the individual will be in employment – 93 per cent of those who attained the gold standard were in employment, compared to 85 per cent of those who attained the diploma standard and 84 per cent of those who did not complete their diploma.

¹⁴ *Journalists at Work*, M Spilsbury for the NCTJ, 2018

3 Three-year follow-up



3.1 Current activities of students

Employment rates are high: 92 per cent were working (as their main activity). Eight per cent were not working, with two per cent engaged in further study, two per cent unemployed, and one per cent developing a professional portfolio. Three per cent were classed as ‘doing something else’ which included having retired, travelling, taking maternity leave, etc.

These employment rates are higher than those found in the HESA data for all graduates, which shows that regarding their main activity: 86 per cent were employed (compared to 92 per cent of NCTJ graduates), two per cent were unemployed (the same as for NCTJ graduates), seven per cent were engaged in further studies (higher than the two per cent of NCTJ graduates), one per cent were developing a professional portfolio (also one per cent in the NCTJ graduates) and three per cent were engaged in some ‘other’ activity (as with NCTJ graduates).

Table 3.1: Current destination, three-year follow-up

	Any activity	Main activity
	%	%
Employed, either full-time or part-time (including self-employed, freelance, voluntary work or other unpaid work)	93	92
Unemployed and looking for work	3	2
Engaged in study, training or registered as a research student	5	2
Developing a professional portfolio or creative practice with a view to starting a business / becoming freelance	9	1
Doing something else (eg retired, travelling, maternity leave)	7	3
Base (n)	134	134

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019

Base = all respondents

Notes: working includes self-employed/freelance, voluntary or unpaid work or an internship or placement.

Multiple responses allowed for ‘any activity’ so percentages will total more than 100%

There are variations in these high employment rates, as shown in Table 3.2 below. Because of the high employment levels, the numbers in the ‘non-working’ categories are small and so, because of this, we have grouped them into a single ‘non-working group. The variations show that:

- those that completed their NCTJ diploma, either at the gold or diploma level, are more likely to be in work (95 and 96 per cent respectively) than those for whom the diploma is incomplete (89 per cent);
- those who studied their NCTJ diploma at an HE institution or independent provider are more likely to be working (94 and 95 per cent respectively) than those who studied at an FE college (85 per cent).

However, these factors will also be inter-related with personal characteristics, because as the data shows:

- those with lower level qualifications are less likely to be in work: 92 per cent of those with a level 5 qualification are working as are 94 per cent of those with a level 4, this compares with 76 per cent of those holding qualifications below level 4;
- Ninety-two per cent of those from white ethnic groups are working compared with 87 per cent of those from non-white groups; and
- Ninety-five per cent of those without disabilities are in work, compared with 56 per cent of those who have a disability.

Table 3.2: Variations in destinations

		Working	Not working	Unweighted base
		%	%	n
All		92	8	
Qualification level				
	Gold standard	95	5	55
	Diploma	96	4	26
	Incomplete	89	11	53
Nature of centre				
	Higher education	94	6	52
	Further education	85	15	36
	Independent provider	95	5	46
Qualification level				
	Level 5 and above	92	8	55
	Level 4	94	6	70
	Below level 4	76	24	9
Ethnicity				
	White	92	8	126
	Non-white	87	13	8
Disability				
	With disability	56	44	7
	Without disability	95	5	123

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019

Base = all respondents

3.2 Journalism-related employment

Sixty-six per cent of those had a full or part-time job, or were due to start a job in the next month, stated that this job was journalism-related. Thirty-four per cent stated that their job was not journalism-related.

Table 3.3: Whether job is journalism-related

	%
Job is journalism-related	66
Job is non journalism related	34
Base (n)	124

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019

Base = all respondents who have a job

Notes: working includes self-employed/freelance, voluntary or unpaid work or an internship or placement

The proportion who are in a journalism-related job (at 66 per cent) is lower than that found for the six-month survey at both the 2019 survey (76 per cent) and in the 2015 destinations research (79 per cent). This suggests that some people started in journalism and then, after a period of time, have moved into other jobs. But it also suggests that there has not been a compensating flow in the other direction, i.e. that people who have not started off as a journalist are unlikely to come into it after working in another occupation.

The relationship we have seen in the six-month destinations survey with those that attained a gold standard in their diploma qualification continues to hold in the three-year follow-up. Eighty-one per cent of those who had achieved the gold standard were working in a journalism-related job, compared to 51 per cent of those who had attained the diploma level and 64 per cent of those who did not complete their diploma.

Table 3.4: Whether the job is journalism-related

		Job is journalism-related	Job is non journalism related	Base
		%	%	(n)
All		66	34	124
NCTJ qualification level				
	Gold standard	81	19	52
	Diploma	52	48	25
	Incomplete	64	36	47

Source: NCTJ destination survey, 2019

Base = all those who are working

Thirty-three per cent of those working in journalism-related jobs were working as writers or reporters, 23 per cent in PR and communications, 16 per cent in editorial management and nine per cent as broadcast reporters.

The comparisons with the 2015 and 2019 data show a pattern that may be expected. Fewer are working as writers and reporters, with higher proportions working in more senior managerial roles (section heads, editorial management). The proportion working in PR and communications, at 23 per cent, is higher. Thus, the data supports the trends, over time, of individuals (i) progressing to senior jobs within traditional journalism and (ii) moving outside traditional journalism into PR and communications roles.

Table 3.5: Title of journalism role

	%
General management	0
Editorial management	16
Section heads	5
Writers & reporters (newspaper and magazines)	33
Broadcast reporters	9
Production (including photographers)	10
PR and communications	23
Other	4
Unweighted base	85

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019

Base is all those working in a journalism capacity

Those not working as journalists were asked what job they were doing. These have been coded to the occupational categories and show that the majority (77 per cent) were employed in higher level occupations – 49 per cent in associate professional and technical occupations, 20 per cent in professional occupations and eight per cent in a managerial, director or senior official occupation.

Table 3.6: Title of non-journalism job role

	%
Managers, directors and senior officials	8
Professional occupations	20
Associate professional and technical occupations	49
Administrative and secretarial occupations	8
Skilled trades occupations	0
Caring, leisure and other service occupations	4
Sales and customer service occupations	2
Process, plant and machine operatives	3
Elementary occupations	0
Insufficient detail to code	6
Unweighted base	39

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019

Base is all those working not in a journalism capacity

Many of these jobs, whilst not specifically journalism-related, have links either into the world of social media or creative media, for example:

'Communications for a charity'

'Writing content, creating website graphics, managing social media, researching other marketing avenues and managing current ones.'

'Content and social media marketing – writing articles and managing social media channels for a university.'

'Social Media Management'

'I worked in TV show development. Coming up with the ideas and pitching them to commissioners for the main channels. I now work for <name of company> as a Development Producer on their original content.'

And in marketing and sales:

'Marketing'

'Work in a Sales Team for a publishing house, mostly administrative'

'I work at a Media Agency as an Account Manager'

Though others have clearly moved away from journalism, into such areas as teaching:

'Teaching primary children'

'Instructor for persons with developmental disabilities.'

'Teach secondary school Latin.'

Or in policy and delivery-related activities:

'I work in Children's Services. I use my skills gained through NCTJ- shorthand, writing, etc'

'Political Researcher / Press Officer'

'Civil Servant – Policy Professional'

'Employment mentoring for women and help on an employability project'

These individuals who were not working as a journalist were asked why this was the case. The responses show that the main reason is the perceived state of the journalism industry (50 per cent of these respondents), with 38 per cent citing low wages and 27 per cent simply that they felt other jobs were preferable.

Table 3.7: Why not working as a journalist

	%
State of the journalism industry	50
Wage	38
Other jobs preferable	27
London-centric	3
Other	11
Not answered	6
Unweighted base	39

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019

Base is all those working not in a journalism capacity

Note: multiple answers allowed so percentages will total more than 100%

In many cases, these factors inter-connect: a feeling that the economic constraints of the sector are impacting on the number of jobs available and the wages that are being paid:

'I do write freelance for a bi-monthly publication but where I live there are very few paid full-time journalism jobs in magazines.'

'Long hours, terrible pay.'

'Journalism is a shrinking industry with fewer positions available.'

‘Tough to develop a career. Shrinking print industry and lack of career opportunities.’

‘I got tired of selling my soul. Publications were more interested in cheap, click-bait like articles than pressing subjects that deserved eyeballs.’

The financial aspects of working in journalism, particularly linked with the need to work in London are also factors for some:

‘Entry level jobs didn’t pay enough to allow me to support myself in London, which is where I was living at the time’

‘Any available work pays minimum wage. Could not afford to live on it.’

‘I did a few internships and freelance but found little money in it. I have now had a baby and needed financial security’

3.3 Sector

The sector of those in employment shows that, overall, two thirds (61 per cent) are working in the creative media sectors – 23 per cent in newspapers, nine per cent in magazines, nine per cent in television, two per cent in radio, 15 per cent in an online/digital sector and four per cent in the PR and corporate communications sector. Thirty-nine per cent are working in other sectors of the economy.

This distribution is very similar to the distribution of jobs found for the 2019 six-month follow-up, with similar proportions in each of the main sectors. This possibly suggests that the change seen in the sectoral employment in the six-month surveys from 2015 to 2019 is due to the change in the structure over time, not due to length of time in the labour market.

Table 3.8: Sector of employment

		All	Journalism-related jobs	Non-journalism-related jobs
		%	%	%
Newspapers		23	34	0
	Regional or local newspaper	17	25	0
	National newspaper	6	9	0
Magazines		9	13	0
	Business magazines	6	9	0
	Consumer/leisure magazines	1	2	0
	Other magazines	2	2	0
Radio		2	4	0
	Regional or local radio	2	4	0
	National radio	0	0	0
Television		9	10	5
	National TV	6	9	0
	Regional TV	2	1	3
	Cable/satellite TV	1	0	2
Online/digital company		15	16	15
Public relations and corporate communications company		4	5	2
Rest of the economy		39	19	79
	Wholesale and retail trade	1	1	2
	Transportation and storage	1	0	2
	Information and communication	6	2	12
	Professional and scientific activities	2	1	5
	Administration and support activities	2	0	5
	Public administration and defence	2	0	5
	Education	7	2	17
	Human health and social work	10	6	17
	Arts, entertainment and recreation	4	5	2
	Other service activities	2	1	2
	Other	3	0	10
Unweighted base		124		

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019

Base = all those working

3.4 Region of work

Nine out of ten (90 per cent) of the respondents were working in the UK, some 10 per cent out of the UK. We again see the concentration in London and the south east (41 per cent), though this is:

- slightly less pronounced than for the six-months responses (41 per cent compared to 45 per cent); and
- more pronounced for those working in journalism jobs than those on non-journalism jobs.

Table 3.9: Place of work

		All	Journalism-related job	Non-journalism-related job
		%	%	%
In the UK		90	89	91
	London	32	33	29
	South east	9	10	7
	South west	3	0	7
	West Midlands	6	4	10
	East Midlands	4	5	2
	East/East Anglia	5	7	0
	Yorkshire & Humberside	3	3	2
	North west	7	10	2
	North	4	3	7
	Scotland	10	10	10
	Wales	1	1	2
	Northern Ireland	6	3	12
Not in the UK		10	11	9
Base		122	81	41

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019

Base = all those working

3.5 Nature of employment

The majority (83 per cent) of those employed were working on a full-time basis, with five per cent employed part-time and two per cent on a self-employed or freelance basis.

The HESA data for all HE graduates shows the same proportion (83 per cent) working full-time, but double the proportion working part-time (10 per cent). There are also half the proportion working on a self-employed/freelance basis than that found amongst those who studied for the NCTJ diploma (six per cent compared to 12 per cent).

Table 3.10: Nature of employment

	%
Employed full-time	83
Employed part-time	5
Self-employed or freelance	12
Doing voluntary work / other unpaid work (including internships)	0
Unweighted base	124

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019

Base is all those working

Nearly three quarters (74 per cent) are on a permanent contract. Sixteen per cent are on fixed-term contracts (12 per cent lasting 12 months or longer, four per cent less than 12 months). On this measure, seven per cent record themselves as being self-employed or freelance.

The comparison with the wider HESA data for all HE graduates suggests that the NCTJ graduates are less likely to be working on a permanent or open-ended contract (74 per cent compared to 79 per cent of all HE graduates), and more likely to be on a fixed-term contract (16 per cent compared to 12 per cent) and more likely to be self-employed (seven per cent compared to five per cent of all HE graduates).

Table 3.11: Nature of employment

	%
On a permanent or open-ended contract	74
On a fixed-term contract lasting 12 months or longer	12
On a fixed-term contract lasting less than 12 months	4
Setting up or managing your own business	1
Self-employed/freelance	7
Temporarily, through an agency	0
Temporarily, other than through an agency	0
Employed on another basis	1
Don't know	0
Unweighted base	124

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019

Base is all those working

3.6 Salary

The pay that people are receiving for their main job varies between those who are unpaid (one per cent), through to 38 per cent who were earning more than £30,000. The median level of pay is £27,500.

As would be expected, the salaries of those who have been in the labour market for three years are considerably higher than those who have been in work for only six months, with a median pay of £27,500 compared to the £22,500 found in the six-month follow-up.

This average salary level is the same as for the wider all-graduate data from the HESA data at £27,500.

Table 3.12: Earnings for main job

	%
Unpaid	1
Less than £10,000	1
£10,000 - £14,999	1
£15,000 - £19,999	11
£20,000 - £24,999	22
£25,000 - £29,999	25
£30,000+	38
Prefer not to say	1
Average (median)	£27,500
Base	124

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019

Base is all those working

3.7 Reason why taken the job

The majority of those working decided to take the job that they were doing because it was the type of work that they wanted and fitted into their career plan. Looking at 'any reason' (where respondents give more than one response) 69 per cent stated that they took the job because it was the type of job that they wanted, 51 per cent stated that it was in order to earn a living, and 30 per cent that it was the best (or only) job offer they received.

Looking at the main reason (where respondents are allowed to only give one answer), the majority give responses which align to career development: 48 per cent say that it was because it was the type of job that they wanted and fitted into their career plan, 13 per cent that it was in order to earn a living and 10 per cent that it was the only/best job offer they had received.

The responses from the HESA data show a broadly similar level of response. Fifty-nine per cent stated that they took the job because it fitted into the individual's career plan or was exactly the type of work they wanted (compared to 69 per cent for the NCTJ graduates), 40 per cent that it was to earn a living (compared to 51 per cent above).

Table 3.13: Reason for taking the job

	Any reason	Main reason
	%	%
It fitted into my career plan / it was exactly the type of work I wanted	69	48
In order to earn a living	51	13
It was the best job offer I received / only job offer I received	30	10
It was an opportunity to progress in the organisation	28	8
To gain experience in order to get the type of job I really want	26	6
To broaden my experience / to develop general skills	42	5
In order to pay off debts	8	2
To see if I would like the type of work it involved	19	1
Other	9	9
Base	109	109

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019 • Base = all those working

When we examine the main reason for taking the job by the nature of the job, we can see that those who are in journalism-related jobs are more likely to have taken the jobs for career reasons – 57 per cent of those in journalism-related jobs say that it was the type of job that they wanted or fitted into a career plan, compared to 31 per cent of those in a non-journalism related jobs. Conversely, those in non-journalism jobs were more likely to give other responses: 21 per cent that it was to earn a living (compared to eight per cent of those in journalism-related jobs) and 18 per cent that it was the best/only job offer they received (compared to five per cent of those in journalism-related jobs).

Table 3.14: Reason for taking the job (main reason) and type of job

	All	Journalism-related job	Non-journalism-related job
	%	%	%
It fitted into my career plan / it was exactly the type of work I wanted	48	57	31
In order to earn a living	13	8	21
It was the best job offer I received / only job offer I received	10	5	18
It was an opportunity to progress in the organisation	8	9	5
To gain experience in order to get the type of job I really want	6	7	3
To broaden my experience / to develop general skills	5	4	6
In order to pay off debts	2	0	6
To see if I would like the type of work it involved	1	0	2
Other	9	9	7
Base	109	74	35

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019 • Base = all those working

3.8 Finding out about the job

The ways in which individuals found out about the job they are doing (or are just about to start) are varied, with no single means dominating. Twenty per cent stated that it was via a contact (either professional work or educational), 14 per cent that it was through an online or web-based recruitment agency and 14 per cent that it was via the employer's website.

Table 3.15: Finding out about the job

	%
Professional, work or educational contacts or networks	20
Online/web-based recruitment agency	14
Employer's website	14
Own institution's career service/website	12
Other careers service/or its website	8
Already/previously worked for the organisation	8
Personal contacts, including family, friends and social networks	7
Speculative approach to employer	4
Newspaper/magazine advertisement/or its website	3
High street recruitment agency	2
Other	13
Don't know/can't remember	5
Unweighted base	109

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019

Base = all those working

Note: multiple response allowed so percentages total more than 100%

3.9 Role of NCTJ qualification in gaining employment

Fourteen per cent of respondents say that the NCTJ diploma was a formal requirement by the employer, with 33 per cent stating that it was not a formal requirement but advantageous. Fifty-three per cent stated that it was not required.

The proportion of respondents saying that the NCTJ diploma is a requirement is at much the same level at the three-year stage as at the six-month stage of their career (where 17 per cent stated that it was a formal requirement and 31 advantageous and 52 per cent that it was not required).

Again, we see that this varies considerably by:

- **the nature of the job.** Those working in journalism-related jobs are much more likely to state that the NCTJ diploma was required (22 per cent a formal requirement, 47 per cent advantageous) than those in non-journalism-related jobs. Ninety-three per cent of those in non-journalism-related jobs say that the NCTJ diploma was not required for their job; and
- **sector:** 82 per cent of those working in the newspaper sector stated that the NCTJ diploma was required (43 per cent a formal requirement, 39 per cent advantageous). But this declines to 59 per cent of those working in the magazine sector, 50 per cent of those in TV and radio. At the other end of the scale, 71 per cent of those working in PR stated that the diploma was not required, as did 69 per cent of those working across the 'rest of the economy' and 67 per cent of those in the online/digital sectors.

Table 3.16: Role of the NCTJ diploma in gaining employment

	Required: formal requirement by the employer	Required: not a formal requirement, but gave an advantage	Not required	Base
	%	%	%	n
All	14	33	53	109
Whether journalism job				
Journalism-related job	22	47	31	74
Not journalism-related job	0	7	93	36
Sector				
Newspapers	43	39	18	25
Magazines	0	59	41	10
TV & Radio	20	30	50	11
Online/digital	0	33	67	14
PR	0	29	71	4
Rest of the economy	5	25	69	46

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019
Base is all those working (109)

The respondents were asked how important (as far as they knew) a series of factors were to their employer when they were offered their current job. The most important factor was evidence of skills and competencies, which 29 per cent thought were a formal requirement and 53 per cent thought to be important (giving an average score of 1.93). Following this was the fact that they had studied journalism (17 per cent noting this as a formal requirement and 41 per cent that it was important, an average score of 2.40). Fourteen per cent stated that the NCTJ diploma (gained in 2015) was a formal requirement, with 24 per cent that the diploma was important. The class or grade of the qualification is deemed to be less important, with 31 per cent stating that it was not very important and 39 per cent that it was not important (an average score of 3.10).

That skills and competencies should be regarded as being more important than 'qualification-related' factors should perhaps not be a surprise in a survey which is conducted three years after leaving education. Qualifications are important in facilitating the transition from education into work but, once work has been obtained, become less important as work-based skills and experience become increasingly more so.

Table 3.17: Importance of factors to employer

	Formal requirement (1)	Important (2)	Not very important, but helped (3)	Not important (4)	Don't know	Mean
	%	%	%	%	%	n
That you studied journalism	17	41	24	16	2	2.40
The NCTJ qualification studied for in 2015	14	24	25	35	2	2.83
The class or grade of the qualification obtained	3	22	31	39	5	3.10
Evidence of skills and competencies	29	53	10	6	3	1.93

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019
Base is all those working (109)

The importance of these factors varies considerably depending on whether the job that the individual is doing is journalism-related or not. Thus:

- having studied journalism was a formal requirement for 27 per cent of those in a journalism job and important for a further 55 per cent. This was not a formal requirement for any of the respondents in a non-journalism job and important for only 14 per cent;
- having gained the NCTJ diploma was a formal requirement for 21 per cent of those in a journalism job and important for a further 35 per cent. It was not important for 74 per cent of those in non-journalism-related jobs;

The responses for the factors which do not specifically relate to journalism qualifications are similar for respondents in journalism and non-journalism related jobs.

Table 3.18: Importance of factors to employer

		Formal requirement	Important	Not very important, but helped	Not important	Don't know	Mean
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)		
		%	%	%	%	%	n
That you studied journalism							
	All	17	41	24	16	2	2.40
	Journalism job	27	55	14	1	3	1.89
	Non-journalism job	0	14	43	44	0	3.30
The NCTJ qualification studied for in 2015							
	All	14	24	25	35	2	2.83
	Journalism job	21	35	27	13	3	2.34
	Non-journalism job	0	5	21	74	0	3.69
The class or grade of the qualification obtained							
	All	3	22	31	39	5	3.10
	Journalism job	5	25	36	28	6	2.93
	Non-journalism job	0	18	23	58	2	3.41
Evidence of skills and competencies							
	All	29	53	10	6	3	1.93
	Journalism job	35	51	8	4	3	1.79
	Non-journalism job	16	56	14	11	3	2.20

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019

Base is all those working (109)

On balance, those qualifying with the NCTJ diploma rate their qualification as being less important to their employers than all graduates.

Table 3.19: Importance of factors to employer: NCTJ graduates and HESA data compared

	Formal requirement (1)	Important (2)	Not very important, but helped (3)	Not important (4)	Don't know	Mean
	%	%	%	%	%	n
Subject studied						
That studied journalism	17	41	24	16	2	2.40
All subjects	27	28	22	17	1	2.25
Type of qualification you obtained						
The NCTJ qualification	14	24	25	35	2	2.83
All subjects	35	28	21	15	1	2.17
Class or grade of the qualification obtained						
NCTJ	3	22	31	39	5	3.10
All subjects	13	29	29	27	2	2.72
Evidence of skills and competencies						
NCTJ	29	53	10	6	3	1.93
All subjects	35	46	11	8	1	1.91

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019
 Base is all those working (109)

Furthermore, the respondents rate work experience from other employment as being of more importance than either work experience gained during the NCTJ qualification. This is to be expected: after three-and-a-half years in the labour market, experience gained from work during that intervening period will have more immediate relevance than that done as part of a qualification some time previous.

Table 3.20: Importance of factors to employer

	Formal requirement (1)	Important (2)	Not very important, but helped (3)	Not important (4)	Don't know	Mean
	%	%	%	%	%	n
Any work experience or work placement that was part of the NCTJ qualification you studied for in 2015	1	28	35	30	5	2.99
Any further qualifications that you have obtained after the NCTJ qualification in 2015	11	20	27	34	6	2.91
Relevant work experience from previous employment	24	55	14	6	1	2.01

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019

Base is all those working (109)

The average score varies according to whether the individual is holding a journalism job or is in non-journalism-related work, where (in all cases) those in journalism jobs rate the NCTJ diploma as being more important on each of the factors than those in a non-journalism job.

Table 3.21: Importance of factors to employer

	All	Journalism job	Non-journalism job
	n	n	n
Any work experience or work placement that was part of the NCTJ qualification you studied for in 2015	2.99	2.72	3.51
Any further qualifications that you have obtained after the NCTJ qualification in 2015	2.91	2.90	2.93
Relevant work experience from previous employment	2.01	1.92	2.21

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019

Base is all those working (109)

The comparisons with the HESA 'all-graduate' data is not conclusive. Respondents rate work experience on the NCTJ qualification less highly than the all-graduate responses from HESA, similarly with any qualifications gained after the 2015 qualification. However, relevant work experience from previous employment is rated more highly by the NCTJ graduates.

Table 3.22: Importance of factors to employer

	NCTJ	HESA: all graduates
	n	n
Any work experience or work placement that was part of the (NCTJ) qualification you studied for in 2015	2.99	2.38
Any further qualifications that you have obtained after the NCTJ/HE qualification in 2015	2.91	1.61
Relevant work experience from previous employment	2.01	2.30

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019

Base is all those working (109)

3.10 Preparing individuals for work

Sixty-three per cent of respondents believe that their NCTJ diploma has prepared them well for work (16 per cent very well, 47 per cent quite well). Just over a third (34 per cent) believe that the NCTJ diploma did not prepare them well for work.

Table 3.23: View of NCTJ course in preparing individuals you for work or help you progress your career aspirations

	%
Very well (1)	16
Quite well (2)	47
Not very well (3)	20
Not at all (4)	14
Don't know	3
Mean	2.33
Unweighted base	134

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019

Base = all respondents

This varies, such that those who have achieved their diploma at a higher level, are working and are working in a journalism job are more likely to think that their NCTJ qualification has prepared them well for their career aspirations. There is evidently a relationship between qualification level, success in the labour market and satisfaction with the qualification, in that the higher the qualification level obtained, the more likely they are to be working and working as a journalist and the higher they rate the diploma. But this does raise a question of whether a lack of success by an individual in the qualification (and subsequently in the labour market) actually means that the course is not as good.

Table 3.24: View of NCTJ course in preparing individuals you for work or help you progress your career aspirations

		Well	Not well	Base
All		63	34	134
Qualification level				
	Gold standard	87	13	55
	Diploma	62	31	26
	Incomplete	49	47	53
Employment status				
	Working	65	31	124
	Not working	36	64	11
Journalism job				
	Journalism-related job	81	18	85
	Non-journalism-related job	35	57	39

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019

Base = all respondents

Using the qualification-related skills in work

Eighty-six per cent of the respondents feel that their current work enables them to use the skills they gained during their NCTJ diploma experience, 27 per cent to a great extent and 59 per cent to some extent.

As might be expected, those working in journalism jobs are more likely to say that they use the skills developed on the diploma course than those not working as a journalist. However, even amongst those working in non-journalism-related jobs, 11 per cent state that they use the skills developed on the course a great deal and 63 per cent to some extent. Clearly, skills developed on the NCTJ diploma are transferable outside of journalism work.

The HESA data shows that 39 per cent of all graduates use the skills gained during their degree experience 'a great extent', 47 per cent to 'some extent' and 13 per cent 'not at all'. This is a distribution more similar to the NCTJ graduates working in journalism-related jobs.

Table 3.25: Extent to which the current work enables use of skills gained during the diploma experience

	All	Journalism-related jobs	Non-journalism-related jobs
	%	%	%
A great extent	27	39	11
Some extent	59	56	63
Not at all	13	4	26
Don't know	1	1	0
Unweighted base	134	85	39

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019

Base = all respondents

Amongst those respondents who felt able to provide the information, just over a fifth of respondents (21 per cent) believed that the NCTJ diploma had prepared them well for being self-employed or setting up their own business. Seventy-eight per cent stated that it had not prepared them well.

As might be expected, amongst those that are currently self-employed or working as a freelance, the responses are more positive, with 35 per cent stating that they felt well prepared. However, this still leaves 65 per cent feeling that they were not well prepared by the NCTJ diploma for self-employment.

Table 3.26: View of NCTJ course in preparing individuals for being self-employed or setting up their own business

	All	All (excluding don't knows and not applicable)
	%	%
Very well (1)	1	3
Quite well (2)	9	18
Not very well (3)	16	33
Not at all (4)	23	45
Have never considered becoming self-employed / setting up own business	41	-
Don't know	10	-
Unweighted base	134	66

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019

Base = all respondents

The reasons why the respondents generally felt that they had been not well prepared was that there was not enough information provided.

Table 3.27: Why NCTJ course does not prepare individuals well for being self-employed or setting up their own business

	%
Not enough information/help with being freelance/self-employed	37
Nothing about this was covered (general unspecified)	29
Need advice/help with the admin side (pitching/fees/accounts, etc)	24
Other	6
Don't know/not answered	32
Unweighted base	51

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019

Base = all respondents who feel NCTJ does not prepare you well for self-employment

Note: multiple responses permitted so percentages total more than 100%

3.11 Views on the NCTJ experience

The respondents were asked if they were to choose whether or not to do their NCTJ qualifications again to assess the likelihood of making the same choices. This shows that:

- 34 per cent of respondents felt it likely that they would do a different subject, with 57 per cent saying it is unlikely that they would change;
- 17 per cent think it likely that they would study at a different institution, while 76 per cent believe it unlikely that they would have studied at a different institution;
- 24 per cent think it likely that they would work to a different type of qualification; and
- 24 per cent think that it is likely that they would decide to do something completely different.

Table 3.28: Whether would choose to do something different

	Very likely (1)	Likely (2)	Not very likely (3)	Not likely at all (4)	Don't know	Mean
	%	%	%	%	%	n
Do a different subject	16	18	26	31	9	2.80
Study at a different institution	9	8	28	48	8	3.23
Work towards a different type of qualification	13	11	28	34	14	2.97
Decide to do something completely different	14	10	27	38	11	3.00

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019

Base is all respondents (134)

Comparison with the HESA all-graduate data suggests that NCTJ graduates are:

- just as likely to think they would do a different subject (34 per cent think it likely or likely, compared to 34 per cent of HESA all graduates);
- Less likely to believe that they would study at a different institution (17 per cent think it would be likely or very likely compared to 22 per cent of all HESA graduates);
- Less likely to think they would work towards a different type of qualification (24 per cent of NCTJ graduates compared to 29 per cent of all HESA graduates); and
- Just as likely to feel that they would do something completely different (24 per cent of NCTJ graduates think they would do something completely different compared to 23 per cent of all HESA graduates).

Fifty-seven per cent of respondents believed that their NCTJ course was good value for money (with 21 per cent strongly agreeing and 36 per cent agreeing). Twenty-one per cent do not think that the NCTJ course was good value for money.

The NCTJ graduates are less likely to believe that their course was good value for money than the HESA all-graduates. Here, 66 per cent thought their course was good value for money (25 per cent strongly agreeing, 41 per cent agreeing) with an average score of 2.28.

Table 3.29: View of NCTJ course as being good value for money

	%
Strongly agree (1)	21
Agree (2)	36
Neither agree nor disagree (3)	22
Disagree (4)	12
Strongly disagree (5)	9
Mean	2.51
Unweighted base	134

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019 • Base = all respondents

The data shows that satisfaction with the value for money of the NCTJ course varies with (i) qualification attainment and (ii) employment related aspects. We can see that:

- those that completed the NCTJ diploma (at either gold standard or diploma level) are more likely they are to feel the course is value for money than those that did not complete it;
- those that are working, and working in a journalism-related job are more likely to feel that the NCTJ course was value for money;

Table 3.30: Whether NCTJ course was good value for money

	Value for money	Neither	Not value for money	Base
All	57	22	21	134
Qualification level				
Gold standard	71	16	13	55
Diploma	73	8	20	26
Incomplete	41	32	26	53
Employment status				
Working	58	22	20	123
Not working	45	27	27	11
Journalism job				
Journalism-related job	67	24	9	85
Non-journalism-related job	41	18	42	39

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019 • Base = all respondents

3.12 Satisfaction with career and general well-being

Seventy-eight per cent of respondents are satisfied with their career to date, with 31 being very satisfied and 47 per cent satisfied. A fifth (20 per cent) are not satisfied, with 14 per cent not very satisfied and six per cent not at all satisfied.

This level of satisfaction with careers is less than found in the HESA all graduate data. Here, 88 per cent are satisfied with their career to date, with 40 per cent being very satisfied and 48 per cent being satisfied with a mean score of 1.74 compared to the 1.95 for NCTJ graduates.

Table 3.31: Satisfaction with career to-date

	%
Very satisfied (1)	31
Fairly satisfied (2)	47
Not very satisfied (3)	14
Not at all satisfied (4)	6
Don't know	2
Mean	1.95
Unweighted base	134

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019

Base = all respondents

There is variation in this, such that:

- those that are working are more likely to be satisfied with their career to-date than those who are not working (79 per cent compared to 55 per cent); and
- those working in a journalism-related job are more likely to be satisfied with their career to-date than those in a non-journalism related date (88 per cent compared to 62 per cent).

Table 3.32 Satisfaction with career to-date

		Satisfied	Not satisfied	Base
All		78	20	134
Employment status				
	Working	79	18	124
	Not working	55	45	11
Journalism job				
	Journalism-related job	88	10	85
	Non-journalism-related job	62	35	41

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019

Base = all respondents

The respondents were asked a series of questions about their general well-being. These show that in overall terms those who studied for the NCTJ diploma are satisfied with their life, scoring 6.99 (on a scale of 0, not at all satisfied, to 10, completely satisfied). Similarly, NCTJ diploma students tend to feel that the things they do in their life are worthwhile (average score 6.99) and feel generally 'happy' (average score 6.95).

The NCTJ diploma students' responses towards anxiety are more equally spread. The average score for this was 4.36, on a scale where 0 is feeling 'not at all anxious' and 10 is 'completely anxious' (on this factor, the lower the score is the better).

However, the NCTJ diploma students score less well than the scores for HESA graduates on each of these measures. HESA graduates are more likely to feel satisfied with their lives, more likely to feel that things they do in their lives are worthwhile, feel happy and are less likely to feel anxious.

Table 3.33: Measures of well being

	Not at all										Completely	
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Mean
Overall how satisfied are you with your life nowadays												
NCTJ	3	1	3	3	5	3	10	19	32	12	9	6.99
HESA	1	0	1	1	2	5	9	23	30	14	13	7.56
Overall to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile												
NCTJ	2	3	2	5	1	4	14	19	27	10	13	6.99
HESA	1	0	1	1	2	5	8	19	27	16	19	7.74
Overall how happy did you feel yesterday												
NCTJ	1	0	3	3	8	7	6	25	25	11	10	6.95
HESA	1	1	1	2	3	7	10	18	23	16	16	7.43
Overall how anxious did you feel yesterday												
NCTJ	7	8	10	15	16	11	9	10	10	3	2	4.36
HESA	22	9	14	11	8	10	8	8	6	2	2	3.44

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019

Base = all respondents

The level of satisfaction on these well-being measures varies with the nature of employment. Those that are in journalism-related jobs are more likely to be satisfied with their lives (mean score of 7.46 compared to 6.68 of those in non-journalism related jobs), more likely to feel that the things they do in their life are worthwhile (mean score of 7.36 compared with 6.61) and more likely to say that they felt happy (mean score of 7.13 compared to 6.95). The anxiety scores are more similar, but those in journalism-related jobs are slightly more likely to report that they felt anxious than those in non-journalism-related jobs (4.29 compared to 4.21).

Table 3.34: Measures of well-being and journalism employment

	All	Journalism-related job	Non-journalism-related job
	%	%	%
Satisfied with your life	6.99	7.46	6.68
Feel that things you do in your life are worthwhile	6.99	7.36	6.61
How happy felt yesterday	6.95	7.13	6.95
How anxious felt yesterday	4.36	4.29	4.21

Source: NCTJ three-year destination survey, 2019

Base = all respondents

3.13 Summary

Current activities

More than nine out of 10 (92 per cent) of respondents were working. Of the eight per cent not working, two per cent were unemployed, two per cent engaged in further studies, with three per cent ‘doing something else’ (eg retired, travelling, maternity leave, etc). These employment rates are higher than found in the HESA longitudinal data, where 86 per cent are in employment.

Sixty-six per cent of the respondents are in a journalism-related job, 34 per cent not. This is lower than found in the six-month survey in 2015, suggesting that some respondents who started their careers in journalism have left it for other careers, but that there has not been a compensating flow into journalism from those who started their career in other occupations.

The relationship between level of NCTJ diploma qualification and positive labour market outcomes noted in the six-month follow up is maintained in this longer-term follow-up. Ninety-five per cent of those who qualified at gold standard are in work, compared to 89 per cent of those who did not complete their diploma; 81 per cent of those who attained the gold standard are working in a journalism-related job, compared with 64 per cent of those who did not complete their diploma.

The dispersion of employment away from the ‘traditional media’ is again seen in the longer-term follow-up. Thirty-nine per cent of the respondents were working in the wider economy – this is particularly so for those in non-journalism related jobs (79 per cent) but nearly a fifth (19 per cent) of those working in journalism-related jobs are working in the wider economy.

The average salary being earned is £27,500, considerably higher than those being earned by the respondents to the six-month survey. This earnings level is the same as for the HESA all-graduate data.

Role of NCTJ diploma in gaining their job

Less than half of respondents (47 per cent) believe that their NCTJ diploma was a requirement for their employer (14 per cent saying it was a formal requirement and 33 per cent that whilst it was not a formal requirement it was advantageous), which is the same level as for the six-month follow-up. Again, this is higher for those working in journalism jobs (where 69 per cent said it was a requirement) than those in non-journalism jobs (seven per cent). It is also higher in some sectors (particularly newspapers at 82 per cent). It is less likely to be seen as being a requirement in online/digital (69 per cent saying it was not required), in PR (71 per cent) or in the wider economy (69 per cent).

When comparing the perceived importance of a variety of factors to their employers, the most important is thought to be evidence of skills and competencies, followed by the fact that journalism was studied, and the nature of the qualification. The respondents believe that the class or grade of qualification gained is the least important factor. Respondents to the HESA all-graduate survey rate their degree as being more important to their employer on each of these factors.

Using skills developed during the NCTJ qualification in work

Sixty-three per cent of those who studied the NCTJ diploma believed that it had prepared them well for work. The higher the qualification level, the more likely it is that the individuals believe that the NCTJ has prepared them well (87 per cent of those with gold standard, 62 per cent of those with diploma compared to 49 per cent of those whose diploma is incomplete). Eighty-one per cent of those working in a journalism role believe the NCTJ had prepared them well, compared to 35 per cent of those working in a non-journalism role.

Eighty-six per cent of the those who studied for the NCTJ diploma believe that they use the skills developed during their qualification in their current work, the same as for the HESA all-graduate respondents.

Views of the NCTJ experience

Respondents were asked whether, if they were to choose their qualification again, they would make the same choices. Thirty-four per cent of those who studied for the NCTJ diploma stated that they would do a different subject, 24 per cent that they would work to a different type of qualification and 24 per cent that they would do something completely different. On these measures, the NCTJ is ranked very similarly to the HESA all-graduate data.

Fifty-seven per cent of those who studied for the NCTJ diploma feel that their NCTJ course was good value for money, a lower rating than the HESA all-graduate data, where 66 per cent believe that their course was good value for money.

Satisfaction with career to date and general well-being

Seventy-eight per cent of those who had studied for the NCTJ diploma are satisfied with their career to date (31 per cent being very satisfied and 47 per cent satisfied). Those working and those working in a journalism-related job are more likely to be satisfied. This level of satisfaction is lower than for the HESA all-graduate sample, where 88 per cent are satisfied with their career.

The majority of those who had studied for the NCTJ diploma are satisfied with their lives (scoring 6.99 on a 0 -10 scale), the majority agree that the things they do with their lives are worthwhile (score of 6.99) and feel 'happy' (score of 6.95). However, NCTJ graduates feel less satisfied with their life than the HESA all-graduate sample (average score of 7.56), are less likely to feel that the things they do are worthwhile (HESA average score of 7.74) and are less generally happy (HESA all-graduate score of 7.43).

4 Discussion and conclusions



This research has followed the post-NCTJ activities of all those who took an NCTJ-accredited course. It suggests that for those who have studied for the diploma:

Employment levels are high and higher than for the all-graduate comparator, in that:

- 86 per cent of those who studied for the NCTJ diploma are in some form of employment six months after their qualification ended (a higher proportion than is suggested by the HESA data exists for those graduating with a degree from a full-time degree course 75 per cent);
- 92 per cent of those who had studied for the NCTJ diploma were in work three years after their studies, again higher than the employment rates for the HESA all-graduate population of 86 per cent;

Relevant employment is high, in that:

- 76 per cent of those with a job are working in a journalism-related job six months after their diploma. This equates to 65 per cent of all those who studied for the NCTJ diploma; and
- 66 per cent of those working are working in a journalism-related job three years after their studies. This equates to 61 per cent of all those who had studied for the diploma.

Of course, this may underestimate the value of the NCTJ in gaining access into journalism – it is possible, of course, that some of those in a non-journalism related job are working in these areas out of choice, not because they have failed to get a journalism related job.

The relationship between the attainment of a higher level of diploma (the gold standard) and employment success is complicated. The attributes that lead to higher levels of NCTJ qualification success (intelligence, hard work, etc) are also those attributes which employers value and will lead to greater chances of securing employment. But qualifications play an important role in signposting to employers that an individual has those desirable attributes and they are therefore associated with better employment outcomes. That said, it is clear that there is a relationship between higher levels of qualification attainment and (i) likelihood of working and (ii) likelihood of working in a journalism-related job, in that:

- 93 per cent of those who achieved the gold standard are working, compared to 85 per cent of those with the diploma and 84 per cent for whom the diploma is not yet complete; and
- 90 per cent of those with gold standard are working in a journalism-related job, compared to 78 per cent of those with diploma standard and 67 per cent of those yet to complete.

Satisfaction with the NCTJ qualification (and by extension, the training that supports it) is high. 81 per cent believed that it prepares them well for work six months after their qualification. The extent of satisfaction with the NCTJ diploma can further be inferred by the fact that learning activities of those in employment have been relatively low – only 43 per cent have undertaken any learning since they started work. It is possible that this is low precisely because the NCTJ curriculum is successful in covering all necessary areas so that people who have only recently studied (and qualified) have the skills in place that they need.

There is a debate about how long after a qualification has been taken can success in the labour market be attributed to that qualification. Qualifications become less of a feature in recruitment and selection decisions than experiences and skills which have been developed in work (and elsewhere) in the interim. Individuals who hold the qualifications may therefore accord less importance to the qualification. However, this should not detract from the initial importance of the qualification in facilitating the individual gaining access to the job in the first instance, acting as a gateway. The ‘first job’ often sets a trajectory for the later career and, to the extent that the qualification allowed access to that first job, the qualification has therefore had importance in setting this trajectory.

In this light, it is clear is that gaining the diploma, particularly at the gold standard, is more likely to lead to the individuals gaining a job, and a job as a journalist. And what is also clear is that when compared to those that are working in a non-journalism capacity, those who are working as a journalist after three years are (i) more likely to say that they are doing a job that they wanted, rather than one in order to earn a living or pay off debts and (ii) more likely to be satisfied with their career to date and (iii) more likely to reply positively to a range of well-being measures (being more likely to feel satisfied with their lives, that the things they do in their lives are worthwhile and that they feel happy). This is, intuitively, sensible: if an individual wanted to study as a journalist, then those that have successfully followed a career as a journalist are likely to feel more positive than those that have not.

5 Annex 1

Definition of broad job categories



Respondents were asked at various points throughout the survey to nominate the nature of their job they had, were due to start or would want to find. These have been reported throughout the report in broad terms (e.g. general management, section heads, writers and reporters), but in the actual survey respondents were given examples of typical jobs within that broad categories to help them choose. The broad categories and the examples of job titles are shown below.

Broad category	Examples	
General management	Publisher	Publishing director
Editorial management	Editorial director Deputy editor Content editor Picture editor Assistant editor Sub-editor Managing editor Sports editor	Editor Head of editorial Online editor News editor Digital editor Chief sub-editor Web editor Legal editor
Section heads	Chief reporter Director of photography	Head of news Chief sports writer
Writers & reporters (newspaper and magazines)	Journalist Junior reporter Senior reporter Features writer Political reporter	Reporter Crime reporter Staff reporter Sports reporter
Broadcast reporters	Broadcaster Video journalist	Broadcast journalist
Production (including photographers)	Television producer Broadcast assistant Radio producer Photographer Senior photographer	Video producer Producer Assistant producer Press photographer
PR and communications	Communications officer Media manager PR consultant	Media consultant Senior media manager Account manager
Training	Training provider Editorial trainer	Head of training



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