



# **Destinations of NCTJ Diploma in Journalism students**

A report on research commissioned by the NCTJ

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National Council for the  
Training of Journalists



# Acknowledgements



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All views and opinions expressed within this report are those of the author and are not necessarily shared by the National Council for the Training of Journalists.

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# Executive summary



## 1. Background

This report, commissioned by the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ), looks at the ‘destinations’ of people who have studied for the NCTJ Level 3 Diploma in Journalism. It is based on a survey of 205 individuals who had completed their course of study for the NCTJ diploma, following them up some 6 – 10 months afterwards with an online survey. The research approach was based on that used by the UK’s Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA), which conducts regular destination surveys of graduates from the UK’s HE institutes.

## 2. Destinations of students

82 per cent of those who had completed the NCTJ diploma course were in work at the time of the follow-up survey. This is higher than the 70 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 – 96 per cent of those who attained the gold standard were in employment, compared to 90 per cent of those who attained the diploma standard and 72 per cent of those who did not complete their diploma.

## 3. Nature of employment

79 per cent of those that had a full-time or part-time job were in a journalism-related job. 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 (86 per cent) when compared to those who had the diploma level (76 per cent) and 75 per cent of those who did not complete their diploma.

The majority of respondents in work were engaged in the creative media sectors – 30 per cent in newspapers, 11 per cent in magazines, seven per cent in television, four per cent in radio and nine per cent in an online or digital sector. A third (35 per cent) are working in other sectors of the economy.

58 per cent are in a permanent or open-ended contract, with a further 13 per cent in a fixed-term contract of 12 months or more. Again, we see that those who had attained gold standard in the diploma were more likely to have these more stable employment contracts – 68 per cent with the gold standard were in a permanent job compared to 60 per cent with the diploma and 49 per cent who did not get their diploma.

The median salary for those working after their NCTJ diploma is £15,000 – £19,999, less than the comparable level for all HESA graduates of £20,500.

The NCTJ qualification was regarded as being required by their employers by 61 per cent of all respondents (with 29 per cent that it was a formal requirement and 32 per cent that whilst it was not a formal requirement it was an advantage). Amongst those in journalism jobs, 77 per cent stated that having the NCTJ was required (37 per cent that it was a necessity, 40 per cent an advantage).

## 4. 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 (72 per cent) intend looking for journalism-related work in the future.

## 5. Learning activities since starting employment

Just over a third (36 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 five 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 (12 per cent of those in work and who had received training) stated that the training was necessary to fill gaps that the NCTJ curriculum did not cover – this equates to four per cent of all those that have started work after their NCTJ.

## 6. 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. 77 per cent state that it has prepared them well for employment, 80 per cent that it prepared them well for further study and 60 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.

In more detail, the core skill areas of reporting, law, shorthand and public affairs are all rated highly in having been helpful in preparing respondents for employment. Even amongst those who were not working in a journalistic capacity, high proportions found the journalistic core skills to be still valuable in preparing them for work.





# 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 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. This report describes:

- the destinations of those who have taken the NCTJ examinations some 6 – 10 months after they have taken their NCTJ examinations
- for those that are working, the nature of that employment, in terms of whether the job is a journalism-related job or not, the nature of the job, earnings, the role the NCTJ played in finding that job and why the individual took that job
- for those that are not working, what they are currently doing and their future work-related intentions
- for those that are working, their learning experiences whilst they have been in work
- views of the NCTJ experience and the perceived value of the NCTJ qualification

## 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 training courses at centres across the country to deliver the training for the qualification. Training centres can be based in higher education, colleges of further education or private training providers, but they all have to deliver the NCTJ Diploma in Journalism's programmes of study. To gain the Diploma in Journalism, candidates must complete:

- five **mandatory** units – news reporting, multimedia portfolio for journalists, essential media law for journalists, essential public affairs for journalists and Teeline shorthand for journalists
- at least two **optional** units, taken from media law court reporting, video journalism from online, production journalism, sports journalism, business of magazines, broadcast journalism and business and financial journalism<sup>1</sup>

The NCTJ diploma can be awarded two levels:

- the **gold standard**, which entails getting grades A – C in all modules and 100 words per minute in the shorthand examination
- 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, their diploma attainment is not yet complete and re-examinations are necessary.

<sup>1</sup> If they wish to follow a news reporters' pathway they must ensure that one of the units is media law court reporting as this is an National Qualification in Journalism progression requirement.

## 1.3 Research approach

The research approach was based on that used by the UK's Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA), which conducts regular destinations surveys of graduates from UK's HE institutes. Basing our research on this established survey gives us the advantages of (i) being able to learn from a well-respected approach that produces data which is widely used in UK policy making and (ii) giving us data to benchmark against.

We have identified all those individuals who had completed their course of study between May 2014 and October 2014 and have a contactable email address, a total of 1,096 individuals. We contacted all of these in March via email asking them to complete an online survey. We achieved 205 responses, 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: ie, 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 (ie 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 is 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.

The appropriate control total is the total sample size, excluding those for whom we did not have a viable email address. This comes to 1,096, with proportions of:

**Table 1:** Qualification level

	n	%
Gold	308	28
Diploma	209	19
Incomplete	579	53
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,096</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: NCTJ management information

Throughout the report we compare the findings to the data from the latest HESA data available (2012 – 13)<sup>2</sup>. 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 higher education institutions (HEIs), further education (FE) colleges and private training providers. Indeed, the NCTJ diploma may be delivered as part of a wider undergraduate course in journalism delivered by an HEI. 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:

- 47 per cent of the respondents are male, 53 per cent female
- the respondents are mainly young with 62 per cent aged 24 and below
- the majority of the respondents are from white ethnic minority groups (88 per cent)
- four per cent of respondents have a health problem or disability that limits the type of work that they can do

The respondents are highly qualified with 35 per cent having a level 5 qualification (postgraduate level), 53 per cent to level 4 (undergraduate degree or equivalent) and with only 13 per cent being qualified below degree level. These people who do not hold at least a level 4 qualification are predominantly young.

<sup>2</sup> Statistical First Release 205, Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education in the United Kingdom 2012/13, Office for National Statistics, 2014.

**Table 2:** Personal characteristics

	%
<b>Sex</b>	
Male	47
Female	53
<b>Age</b>	
18 - 21	11
22 - 24	51
25 - 29	26
30 - 39	6
40 - 49	3
50 and over	2
Prefer not to say	2
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
White	88
Non-white	11
Prefer not to say	0
<b>Disability</b>	
Yes	4
No	92
Prefer not to say	4
<b>Qualification level</b>	
Level 5 (postgraduate qualification)	35
Level 4 (undergraduate degree or equivalent)	53
Below Level 4 (A levels, GCSE/O levels, other. No qualifications)	13
<b>Base</b>	<b>205</b>

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 205

Notes: 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 achieved<sup>3</sup>, 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 28 per cent had gained the diploma at the gold standard level, 19 per cent at the diploma level, whilst 53 per cent had not completed or achieved the standard to attain the diploma
- 26 per cent took the training leading to NCTJ diploma as part of a masters course, 26 per cent as part of an undergraduate course, 25 per cent as part of a fast track, 21 per cent as part of an undergraduate degree course, 19 per cent as part of an academic-year course and 10 per cent on a part-time or 'other' course
- 47 per cent undertook their training at a HEI, 26 per cent at a FE college and 27 per cent at a private training provider

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

<sup>3</sup> We also asked the individuals in the survey what their qualification level was, but used 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.



## 2. Destinations of students



### 2.1 Main destination

82 per cent were working as their main activity (or due to start work in the next month). Nine per cent were unemployed, with five per cent engaged in further study. Minorities were doing other activities – two per cent were ‘doing something else’ (which includes retiring or looking after the home or family) and one per cent were taking time out to travel.

**Table 3:** Current destination

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

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 205

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

This employment rate is higher than that which is reported for all HE leavers in 2012/13 by HESA<sup>4</sup>. This suggests that 70 per cent were in work either in the UK or overseas (compared to the 82 per cent found for NCTJ students), six per cent were unemployed (lower than the nine per cent for NCTJ students) and 20 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.

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. 96 per cent of those with the gold standard are in employment of some kind (or due to start in the next month, compared to 90 per cent of those who have achieved the diploma standard and 72 per cent of those for whom the diploma is incomplete
- those who studied on a fast-track or part-time course are most likely to be working
- those who studied at a private training provider are most likely to be employed (with 97 per cent working), compared to 87 per cent of those who studied at an HEI and 67 per cent of those who studied at an FE college

<sup>4</sup> Statistical First Release 205, Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education in the United Kingdom, 2014

**Table 4:** Variations in destinations

	Working	Studying	Unemployed	Other	Unweighted base
	%	%	%	%	(n)
<b>All</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>205</b>
<b>Qualification level</b>					
Gold	96	0	3	1	<b>57</b>
Diploma	90	6	4	0	<b>39</b>
Incomplete	72	8	14	6	<b>109</b>
<b>Course type</b>					
Masters	83	3	14	0	<b>54</b>
Undergraduate	81	2	7	11	<b>42</b>
Fast-track	93	4	1	1	<b>51</b>
Academic-year	73	6	18	4	<b>38</b>
Part-time and other	75	25	0	0	<b>20</b>
<b>Nature of centre</b>					
HE	82	2	11	5	<b>96</b>
FE	67	17	13	3	<b>53</b>
Private provider	97	0	1	1	<b>55</b>

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 205

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 Summary

82 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 70 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 – 96 per cent of those who attained the gold standard were in employment, compared to 90 per cent of those who attained the diploma standard and 72 per cent of those who did not complete their diploma.

## 3. Nature of employment



### 3.1 Introduction

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 job<sup>5</sup>.

### 3.2 Nature of employment

#### Journalism-related employment

79 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. 21 per cent stated that their job was not journalism-related.

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

- 86 per cent of those who had achieved the gold standard were working in a journalism-related job, compared to 76 per cent of those who had attained the diploma level and 75 per cent of those who did not complete their diploma
- those who had done a fast-track or masters course had the highest journalism-related employment rates (88 and 87 per cent respectively)

<sup>5</sup> 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 5:** Whether the job is journalism-related

	Job is journalism-related	Job is non journalism-related	Base
	%	%	(n)
<b>All</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>180</b>
<b>NCTJ Qualification level</b>			
Gold	86	14	56
Diploma	76	24	36
Incomplete	75	24	89
<b>Course type</b>			
Masters	87	15	46
Undergraduate	75	25	36
Fast-track	88	14	50
Academic-year	72	31	32
Part-time	75	25	12
Other	33	67	5
<b>Nature of centre</b>			
HE	81	19	83
FE	70	30	44
Private provider	83	17	54

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 186

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

## Occupation of job

The more detailed job descriptions (occupations) are shown in table 5. If we consider these as proportions of all jobs, then we can see that 43 per cent of respondents are in a writer or reporter job, with a further 11 per cent in editorial management jobs, 11 per cent in PR and communications and nine per cent working as broadcast reporters. Amongst the 21 per cent that are not working in a journalism-related capacity, the majority are working in higher level occupations: professionals (five per cent) and associate professionals (seven per cent).

If we consider the distribution of journalism-related jobs on that base alone, 55 per cent are working as writers and reporters, with 14 per cent in PR and communications, 13 per cent in editorial management and 11 per cent as broadcast reporters.

**Table 6:** Occupation of those in employment

	All jobs	Journalism or non-journalism jobs
	%	%
<b>Journalism-related jobs</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>100</b>
General management	1	1
Editorial management	11	13
Section heads	1	1
Writers & reporters (newspaper and magazines)	43	55
Broadcast reporters	9	11
Production (including photographers)	3	4
PR and Communications	11	14
Other	3	4
<b>Non journalism-related jobs</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100</b>
Professional occupations	5	23
Associate professional and technical occupations	7	32
Administrative and secretarial occupations	4	22
Caring, leisure and other service occupations	1	6
Sales and customer service occupations	2	12
Process, plant and machine operatives	1	4
Elementary administration and service occupations	1	2
<b>Base</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>180</b>

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 186

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* research<sup>6</sup>. If we compare with the distribution of 'journalism only' jobs for the NCTJ students, we can see that relatively fewer are in editorial management or section head roles (14 per cent compared to about a third of all journalists) and more are employed as writers and reporters (55 per cent compared to 35 per cent of all journalists). This reflects that the NCTJ cohorts are relatively new entrants to work and as yet have not progressed to more senior levels with management responsibility. There is also a striking difference in the proportion of the recent NCTJ qualifiers who are engaged in PR and communications at 18 per cent, compared to the one per cent found in the *Journalists at Work* survey.

<sup>6</sup> *Journalists at Work*, 2012, National Council for the Training of Journalists 2013

**Table 7:** Occupation of those in employment

	NCTJ destination distribution of journalism jobs	JaW 2012 distribution
	%	
General management	1	1
Editorial management	13	33
Section heads	1	2
Writers & reporters (newspaper and magazines)	55	34
Broadcast reporters	11	12
Production (including photographers)	4	11
PR, communications and other	18	1

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015 (unweighted base = 186) and Journalists at Work, 2012 (unweighted base = 1,067)

## Sector

The sector of those in employment shows that overall two thirds (65 per cent) are working in the creative media sectors – 30 per cent in newspapers, 11 per cent in magazines, seven per cent in television, four per cent in radio, nine per cent in the online or digital sector and six per cent in the PR and corporate communications sector. Just over a third (35 per cent) are working in other sectors of the economy.

This obviously varies depending on whether the respondent's actual job is journalism-related or not. Of those working in journalism-related jobs, 77 per cent are working in the creative media sectors, 23 per cent not. Of those not working in journalism-related jobs, 16 per cent are working in the creative media sectors, 84 per cent elsewhere across the economy.



**Table 8:** Sector of employment

	All	Journalism-related jobs	Non-journalism related jobs
	%	%	%
<b>Newspapers</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>0</b>
Regional or local newspapers	24	33	0
National newspapers	6	7	0
<b>Magazines</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>0</b>
Business magazines	6	8	0
Consumer/leisure magazines	3	4	0
Other magazines	2	2	0
<b>Radio</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>
Regional or local radio	2	3	0
National radio	2	2	0
<b>Television</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>
National TV	3	4	0
Regional TV	1	1	0
Cable/satellite TV	3	3	0
Online/digital company	9	9	10
<b>Public relations and corporate communications company</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>84</b>
Manufacturing	1	1	2
Wholesale and retail trade	4	1	18
Accommodation and food services	1	0	6
Information and communication	6	7	0
Financial and insurance activities	2	1	6
Professional and scientific activities	4	1	14
Administration and support activities	2	1	4
Public administration and defence	1	0	4
Education	5	1	19
Human health and social work	6	4	10
Arts, entertainment and recreation	2	1	2
Other service activities	1	1	0
Other	2	1	0
<b>Base</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>38</b>

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 186

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

## 3.2 Nature of contract

The majority of respondents (58 per cent) who were working were in a permanent or open-ended contract, with 13 per cent on a fixed-term contract of a year or longer. 12 per cent were self-employed.

**Table 9:** Nature of job contract

	%
On a permanent or open-ended contract	58
On a fixed-term contract lasting 12 months or longer	13
On a fixed-term contract lasting less than 12 months	7
Self-employed or freelance	12
In charge of your own company	1
Voluntary work	3
On an internship/placement	4
Temping	2
<b>Base</b>	<b>180</b>

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

If we compare this with the HESA data we see the nature of the contracts gained are broadly similar. HESA data suggests that 62 per cent of employed graduates are in a permanent or open-ended contract (58 per cent of those employed after their NCTJ diploma), 24 per cent are on a fixed-term contract (compared to 20 per cent). Six per cent are self-employed or freelance compared to 12 per cent of those who are working after their NCTJ.

The main variation in the nature of contracts relates to the level of NCTJ qualification, where 67 per cent of those who achieved the gold standard were on a permanent or open ended contract, compared to 60 per cent of those who achieved diploma standard and 48 per cent of those whose diploma is not yet complete. By contrast, those with diploma standard or yet to complete are more likely to be self-employed or freelance.

**Table 10: Nature of job contract**

	All	NCTJ qualification level		
		Gold	Diploma	Incomplete
	%	%	%	%
On a permanent or open-ended contract	58	68	60	49
On a fixed-term contract lasting 12 months or longer	13	16	6	13
On a fixed-term contract lasting less than 12 months	7	5	16	6
Self-employed or freelance	12	7	12	16
In charge of your own company	1	0	0	2
Voluntary work	3	0	2	6
On an internship/placement	4	4	2	6
Temping	2	2	2	3
<b>Base</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>89</b>

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

Those who studied for their NCTJ diploma at a private provider are also more likely to be in permanent employment (65 per cent) than those who studied in HE (50 per cent) or at an FE college (57 per cent). They are also more likely to be on a long-term fixed-term contract lasting 12 months or more.

**Table 11: Nature of job contract**

	All	Nature of provider		
		HE	FE	Private provider
	%	%	%	%
On a permanent or open-ended contract	58	50	57	65
On a fixed-term contract lasting 12 months or longer	13	13	9	17
On a fixed-term contract lasting less than 12 months	7	9	5	7
Self-employed or freelance	12	15	14	7
In charge of your own company	1	0	0	3
Voluntary work	3	3	7	0
On an internship/placement	4	7	4	0
Temping	2	3	4	1
<b>Base</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>53</b>

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



### 3.3 Salary

The pay that people are receiving for their main job varies between those who are unpaid, through to four per cent who were earning more than £30,000. The median level of pay is £15,000 – £19,999.

Comparable data for HESA of those who have found work following a full-time, first degree suggests that the median level of pay for these graduates is higher at £20,500. If we take the mid-point of the NCTJ Destination Survey as being £17,500, it suggests the median level of pay for those with an NCTJ diploma is some £3,000 less than the overall average, at some 85 per cent.

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 £27,162<sup>7</sup>, which is considerably higher than those being paid to the new journalists graduating with the NCTJ diploma.

**Table 12:** Earnings for main job

	%
Unpaid	3
Less than 10,000	19
10,000 – 14,999	11
15,000 – 19,999	38
20,000 – 24,999	17
25,000 – 29,999	8
30,000 plus	4
<b>Average (median)</b>	
<b>Base</b>	<b>169</b>

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 174

Notes: all those working full or part-time

### 3.4 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 (46 per cent) located there. This skew is even more pronounced for journalism-related jobs – with 47 per cent of jobs located in London and the south east compared to 38 per cent of non-journalism-related jobs.

It is worth noting, however, that this distribution is less concentrated in London and the south east than that found for all journalists in the *Journalists at Work* research, which suggested that 46 per cent of all journalists were working in London and 14 per cent in the south east.

<sup>7</sup> Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, ONS, 2015: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcn%3A77-337425>

**Table 13: Place of work**

	All	Journalism related job	Non-journalism- related job
	%	%	%
<b>In the UK</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>90</b>
London	31	32	23
South east	15	15	15
South west	4	5	0
West Midlands	6	5	6
East Midlands	2	2	0
East/East Anglia	3	4	0
Yorkshire & Humberside	6	6	6
North west	11	9	16
North	6	4	12
Scotland	6	5	6
Wales	2	2	0
Northern Ireland	5	5	6
<b>Not in the UK</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Base</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>38</b>

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 186

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

## 3.5 Reason why taken the job

The majority of those working decided to take the job that they were doing because it was the one 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 and 40 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: 53 per cent say that it was because it was the type of job that they wanted and 12 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 that they took the job in order to earn a living/pay off debts and six per cent that it was the only job offer they received.

**Table 14:** Reason for taking the job

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

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 186

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

The data from HESA suggests that for the *main* reason, 46 per cent of leavers from HE who were working took their job because it fitted into their career plan, with 12 per cent saying that it allowed them to gain and broaden their experience. 15 per cent stated that it was to earn a living or pay off debts.

There are variations in the NCTJ Destination Survey data, in that:

- higher proportions of those that had achieved gold standard stated that they took the job because it was the type of job they wanted (59 per cent), compared to 52 per cent of those who had achieved diploma level and 48 per cent of those yet to complete
- those who had studied at a private provider were more likely to say that it was the type of job they wanted (61 per cent) compared to those who had studied at HEIs (49 per cent) or an FE college (50 per cent)

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 – 60 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 26 per cent of those in a non-journalism-related job, 16 per cent of those in journalism-related jobs stated that it was to gain experience to get the type of job they wanted, compared to two per cent of those in non-journalism-related jobs. Conversely, those in non-journalism jobs were more likely to give other responses: 29 per cent that it was to earn a living/pay off debts (compared to three per cent of those in journalism-related jobs), 20 per cent that it was the best job offer they received (compared to five per cent of those in journalism-related jobs) and 12 per cent that it was the only job offer they received (five per cent of those in journalism-related jobs).

If we regard the ‘career-related’ responses (‘the type of job that I want’ and ‘to broaden my experience’ as generally positive responses, compared to ‘it was the best job offer received’, ‘in order to pay off debts’ and ‘it was the only job offer received’) as being more negative, then it is clear that those in journalism-related jobs are more satisfied with their employment outcomes than those in non-journalism-related jobs. If we link this to the earlier finding that those with the gold standard are more likely to be in journalism-related jobs this is further evidence that those who achieved gold standard have more positive outcomes than those who have not attained the diploma standard.

**Table 15:** Main reason for taking the job by whether job is journalism-related

	Main reason	Job is journalism-related	Job is not journalism-related
	%	%	%
It was the type of job that I wanted/fitted into my career plan	53	60	26
To gain and broaden my experience in order to get the type of job I really want	12	16	2
It was the best job offer I received	8	5	20
In order to earn a living/pay off debts	8	3	29
It was the only job offer I received	6	5	12
It was an opportunity to progress in the organisation	5	6	0
It was in the right location	4	5	2
To see if I would like the type of work it involved	3	2	8
The job was well paid	2	1	2
<b>Base</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>38</b>

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 186

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

### 3.6 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. 27 per cent stated that it was via a recruitment agency or website, 21 per cent because of personal contacts (including family and friends) and 20 per cent because they had already worked there.

**Table 16:** Finding out about the job

	%
Recruitment agency/website	27
Personal contacts, including family and friends	21
Already worked there (including on an internship/placement)	20
Social media/professional networking sites	11
Media (newspaper/magazine advertisement)	11
The university/college careers service	6
Employer's website	6
Other university/college source	4
Speculative application	2
Other	11
<b>Base</b>	<b>180</b>

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 186

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

The HESA data for all HE leavers shows that the most common way of finding their job was through having already worked there, including on an internship (19 per cent), 18 per cent via an employer's website, 17 per cent via a recruitment agency or website, 15 per cent via personal contacts (including family and friends).

As we can see from this, a fifth 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. 77 per cent had not worked for their current employer before, with the remaining quarter having done so at some point, either before the NCTJ course (six per cent), during (11 per cent) or both before and during (seven per cent).

**Table 17:** Whether had worked for the current employer before

	%
Yes, before my NCTJ course	6
Yes, during my NCTJ course	11
Yes, both before and during my NCTJ course	7
No	77
<b>Base</b>	<b>180</b>

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 186

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

The HESA data suggests that a higher proportion had actually worked for their current employer before – 44 per cent compared to the 23 per cent in the NCTJ Destinations Survey. Six per cent of HESA graduates had worked for their current employer before their programme of study, 19 per cent during their programme of study and 10 per cent before and during their programme of study.

Those had worked for their employer previously was further asked the ways in which they had worked for that employer. The most common is on 'placement or project' work, with 23 per cent stating that they had been on an internship<sup>8</sup>. 35 per cent stated that it was full or part-time work all year round.

**Table 18:** Ways in which worked for employer before or during the NCTJ course

	%
On a sandwich placement	2
On another kind of placement or project work	37
As a holiday job	2
Full or part-time work all year round	35
Full or part-time work during term time	4
On an internship	23
In other ways	15
<b>Base</b>	<b>43</b>

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 41

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

<sup>8</sup> The number and proportion who have done an internship seems relatively low, when compared with the results from *Journalists at Work*, which suggested that 83 per cent of new entrants to journalism had done work experience or an internship before getting their first paid job. The difference is caused by the nature of the question. In this destinations research we followed the style of question used by HESA which asked whether they had worked for their *current employer* before getting this job ie the data is linked to that specific employer not to *any employer*, which is why the proportions differ between the two research projects.



### 3.7 Role of NCTJ qualification in gaining employment

The NCTJ was needed by 61 per cent of the respondents, with 29 per cent stating that it was a formal requirement to get the job that they are doing and 32 per cent that whilst it was not a formal requirement it gave the respondent an advantage. 39 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, 77 per cent stated that it was a requirement (37 per cent a necessity, 40 per cent an advantage). Of the non-journalism-related jobs, 96 per cent stated that the NCTJ qualifications were not required, with only four per cent stating that it gave an advantage.

**Table 19:** Role of the NCTJ qualification in gaining employment

	All	Journalism-related job	Non-journalism-related job
	%	%	%
Required: formal requirement by the employer	29	37	0
Required: not a formal requirement, but gave an advantage	32	40	4
Not required	39	24	96
<b>Base</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>38</b>

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 186

Notes: 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, 40 per cent stated that the qualification was a formal requirement, 23 per cent that it was not a formal requirement but gave an advantage, and 36 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 similar level to the HE qualification (63 per cent say their HE qualification was required compared to 61 per cent the NCTJ). However, if we consider only those who are working in a journalism-related job, we see that the NCTJ is required by a higher proportion (77 per cent compared to 63 per cent).

Although somewhat hypothetical, those who had said that the NCTJ qualification 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 (60 per cent) was 'the skills gained whilst studying for the qualification'.

**Table 20:** Aspects of the NCTJ qualification most valued by the employer

	%
The skills gained whilst I was studying for the qualification	60
The subject studied	13
The level of study	6
Sandwich/work experience gained as part of the course	4
No one thing was most important	16
Don't know	1
<b>Base</b>	<b>111</b>

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 123

Notes: 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 48 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, eight per cent that it was the sandwich/work experience gained as part of the course, with 19 per cent saying that no one thing was most important<sup>9</sup>.

Respondents who had studied at a private provider were more likely to say that the skills studied were important to their employer, whilst those who had been at a HEI were more likely to state that it was the subject studied.

**Table 21:** Aspects of the NCTJ qualification most valued by the employer

	All	Nature of Centre		
		HE	FE	Private provider
	%	%	%	%
The skills gained whilst I was studying for the qualification	60	51	62	70
The subject studied	13	21	14	4
The level of study	6	5	3	9
Sandwich/work experience gained as part of the course	4	3	7	0
No one thing was most important	16	16	14	18
Don't know	1	3	0	0
<b>Base</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>41</b>

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 123

Notes: 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

## 3.8 Summary

79 per cent of those that had a full-time or part-time job were in a journalism-related job. 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 (86 per cent) when compared to those who had the diploma level (76 per cent) and 75 per cent of those who did not complete their diploma.

The majority of respondents in work were engaged in the creative media sectors – 30 per cent in newspapers, 11 per cent in magazines, seven per cent in television, four per cent in radio and nine per cent in an on-line or digital sector. A third (35 per cent) are working in other sectors of the economy.

58 per cent are in a permanent or open-ended contract, with a further 13 per cent in a fixed-term contract of 12 months or more. Again, we see that those who had attained gold standard in the diploma were more likely to have these more stable employment contracts – 68 per cent with the gold standard were in a permanent job compared to 60 per cent with the diploma and 49 per cent who did not get their diploma.

The median salary for those working after their NCTJ diploma is £15,000 – £19,999, less than the comparable level for all HESA graduates of £20,500.

The NCTJ qualification was regarded as being required by their employers by 61 per cent of all respondents (with 29 per cent that it was a formal requirement and 32 per cent that whilst it was not a formal requirement it was an advantage). Amongst those in journalism jobs, 77 per cent stated that having the NCTJ was required (37 per cent that it was a necessity, 40 per cent an advantage).

<sup>9</sup> This is not an exact comparison with HESA as we introduced the 'skills gained' response as part of our questionnaire (having found in the Journalism at Work survey that this was an important feature for employers).

## 4. Activities of those not in employment



### 4.1 Introduction

As we have seen 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 unemployed is of a reasonable size). Care needs to be taken when interpreting and putting reliance on this data.

### 4.2 Current activities of those not in work

Of those not in work:

- the five per cent whose main activity was full-time or part-time **education** were most likely to be doing an undergraduate degree (48 per cent) or a higher degree (34 per cent). The subject matter is mainly journalism-related (86 per cent) with only a minority (14 per cent) studying a non-journalism-related subject
- the one per cent who were **currently travelling** expect, in the majority (78 per cent), to return to the UK and all those who do intend to look for work
- the nine per cent who were **unemployed** are mainly (88 per cent) looking for work at the time of the survey
- the small numbers of respondents (five) who were '**doing something else**' at the time of the survey were mainly looking after their homes and/or families. The majority (71 per cent) intended to return to work at some point in the next 12 months

### 4.3 Job search activities of the unemployed

The unemployed respondents were asked about their journalism-related job search activity since completing the NCTJ course. The average number of jobs applied for is 15, but the majority of these people (90 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 22:** Job search activities of the unemployed

Average number of jobs applied for (median)	15 jobs
Whether been offered any journalism-related jobs	
Yes	10
No	90
<b>Base</b>	

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 17

Notes: all those currently unemployed

These respondents note a number of barriers to finding work, namely a lack of work experience (27 per cent) or a lack of jobs (24 per cent).

**Table 23:** Perceived barriers to finding work

	%
Lack of work experience	27
Not enough jobs	24
Other	48
<b>Base</b>	<b>22</b>

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 17

Notes: all those currently unemployed

## 4.4 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 (72 per cent) still intend to seek a journalism-related job. 28 per cent will not be doing so. This broadly reflects the employment distribution of those who have found work (discussed in section 3 above) – there is no indication that those who are not in work have been in any sense ‘discouraged’ from trying to become a journalist.

**Table 24:** Whether will be seeking a journalism-related job

	All not in employment
	%
Seeking/will seek a journalism-related job	72
Not seeking/will seek a journalism-related job	28
<b>Base</b>	<b>47</b>

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 47

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

The jobs being sought are mainly writers and reporters (39 per cent) or broadcast reporters – a distribution which again broadly reflects the nature of jobs gained by those in employment.

**Table 25:** Occupation of job being sought

All not in employment	
	%
<b>Journalism-related jobs</b>	<b>72</b>
General management	0
Editorial management	2
Section heads	0
Writers & reporters (newspaper and magazines)	39
Broadcast reporters	20
Production (including photographers)	2
PR and communications	7
Other	4
<b>Non journalism-related jobs</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Base</b>	<b>47</b>

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 47

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

The sectors that are desired are spread equally between television (28 per cent), newspapers (26 per cent) and magazines (26 per cent).





**Table 26:** Sector of employment

All not in employment	
	%
<b>Newspapers</b>	<b>26</b>
Regional or local newspapers	14
National newspapers	12
<b>Magazines</b>	<b>26</b>
Business magazines	4
Consumer/leisure magazines	22
Other magazines	0
<b>Radio</b>	<b>4</b>
Regional or local radio	0
National radio	4
<b>Television</b>	<b>28</b>
National TV	10
Regional TV	0
Cable/satellite TV	18
<b>Online/digital company</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Public relations and corporate communications company</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Base</b>	<b>50</b>

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 43

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

## 4.5 Summary

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 (72 per cent) intend looking for journalism-related work in the future.

## 5. Learning activities since starting employment



### 5.1 Extent of learning activities

Since starting employment, 36 per cent had taken part in a learning activity<sup>10</sup> related to their job, with 64 per cent not having done so.

**Table 27:** Whether undertaken learning activities since starting employment

	%
Yes, have undertaken learning activities	36
No, no learning activities undertaken	64
<b>Base</b>	<b>176</b>

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 182

Notes: all those working

There are almost no variations in this 36 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 (34 and 43 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-journalist jobs for which their NCTJ training may not have been so directly applicable.

### 5.2 Nature of learning activities

The main areas that the learning activity covered were professional skills (65 per cent), personal development (38 per cent), IT (27 per cent) and technical aspects (23 per cent).

<sup>10</sup> This was defined so that it included taught courses, evening classes, supervised training whilst doing their job and learning on the job

**Table 28:** Nature of learning activities

	%
Professional skills	65
Personal development	38
Information technology	27
Technical (new equipment/machinery)	23
Health and safety	16
Business/management	0
Other, of which	18
<i>Journalism-related</i>	12
<i>Non-journalism-related</i>	6
<b>Base</b>	

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 68

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

This learning activity was mainly paid for by the employer (66 per cent), with 18 per cent that it had been supplied free, with no costs involved.

**Table 29:** Paying for the learning activities

	%
Your employer	66
You personally	7
Your family	4
Grant from body/trust	2
Supplied free – no costs involved	18
Other	4
<b>Base</b>	<b>63</b>

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 68

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

Generally, the learning activity has been of a short duration. 17 per cent that it had only been for one day, 22 per cent that it had been for two days and 30 per cent that it had been for 3 – 5 days. There are, however, a quarter, who stated that they had received more substantial training input – 24 per cent stated that they had received more than 10 days' training. The average (media) number of days' training received was five.

**Table 30:** Length of learning activities

	%
1 day	17
2 days	22
3 – 5 days	30
6 – 10 days	9
More than 10 days	24
<b>Average (median)</b>	<b>5 days</b>
<b>Base</b>	<b>60</b>

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 65

Notes: 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 (37 per cent), to which could be added the 22 per cent who stated that the training was necessary to address specific skills issues which were only relevant to their employer. 29 per cent stated that the training was to raise skill levels to a higher level.

Only a minority (12 per cent of those in work and who had received training) stated that the training was necessary to fill gaps that the NCTJ curriculum did not cover – this equates to four per cent of all those who have started work after their NCTJ.

Those that are doing non-journalism-related jobs are more likely to state that the training was needed to meet specific employer needs or to address skills issues which are relevant only to the employer.

**Table 31:** Why the learning activities were necessary

	All	Journalism-related job	Non-journalism-related job
	%	%	%
Tailor your skills to the specific employer need	37	34	45
Raise your skills to a higher level	29	35	14
Address specific skills issues which are relevant only to your employer	22	17	36
Fill gaps that the NCTJ curriculum did not cover	12	15	4
	<b>63</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>16</b>

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 68

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

## 5.3 Summary

Just over a third (36 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 five 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 (12 per cent) stated that the training was necessary to fill gaps that the NCTJ curriculum did not cover.

## 6. Views on the NCTJ experience



### 6.1 Introduction

The respondents were asked how well they thought that the NCTJ diploma had prepared them for work, for further study, 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.

### 6.2 Preparation for employment

#### Overall satisfaction levels

Overall, 77 per cent of those who have taken the NCTJ diploma believe that it has prepared them well for employment, with 27 per cent stating that it had done so 'very well'. A quarter (24 per cent) stated that it had failed to do so. The average score is 2.9.

The satisfaction varies such that:

- the higher the attained NCTJ qualification, the more satisfied the individual. 96 per cent of those who attained the gold standard felt that the NCTJ qualification had prepared them well for employment (39 per cent 'very well', 57 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 2.6 for those who have yet to complete (where 38 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. 85 per cent of those in a journalism-related job thought it prepared them well for work, compared to 44 per cent of those in a non-journalism-related job



**Table 32:** How well the NCTJ qualification prepared respondent for employment

	Very well	Well	Not very well	Not at all	Average score	Base
	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)		
	%	%	%	%	n	n
<b>All</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>189</b>
<b>NCTJ qualification level</b>						
Gold	39	57	4	0	3.4	56
Diploma	35	50	3	12	3.1	34
Incomplete	17	44	20	18	2.6	99
<b>Course type</b>						
Masters	22	49	10	20	2.7	51
Undergraduate	12	59	15	15	2.7	34
Fast-track	37	47	10	8	3.1	49
Academic year	42	44	11	3	3.2	36
Part time and other	21	47	26	11	2.8	19
<b>Nature of centre</b>						
HE	17	52	12	17	2.7	86
FE	38	48	10	6	3.1	50
Private provider	32	47	15	8	3.0	53
<b>Nature of job</b>						
Journalism-related job	33	52	8	7	3.1	138
Non-journalism-related job	13	31	31	26	2.3	32

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 205

Notes: all respondents

The HESA data suggests that leavers from all HE institutions give a slightly higher rating for their courses, with an average score of 3.1. 82 per cent stated that their course had prepared them 'well' for employment, with 32 per cent saying that it had prepared them 'very well' and 50 per cent 'well'. 13 per cent stated that the course had not prepared them well and five per cent that it had not prepared them at all well.

The minority (less than a quarter) that said that the NCTJ qualification had failed to prepare them well for employment were asked why they thought this was the case. The responses show that these people feel it was irrelevant to their career or the world of work (22 per cent), 16 per cent that there were gaps in the curriculum, 12 per cent that there had been poor course delivery, 12 per cent that the focus of the NCTJ was on newspapers or a newspaper style of writing and eight per cent a lack of career advice.

Of course, when these numbers are expressed as a proportion of all respondents it puts these 'issues' with the NCTJ curriculum and training in context: only four per cent think that the NCTJ is irrelevant to the world of work, three per cent that there are gaps in the curriculum, two per cent that there had been poor course delivery or an over-focus on newspapers and one per cent that there had been a lack of careers advice.

**Table 33:** Why the NCTJ qualification did not prepare well for employment

	All respondents	Respondents who thought that the NCTJ had not prepared them well for employment
	%	%
Irrelevant to career or world of work	4	22
Gaps in curriculum	3	16
Poor course delivery	2	12
Focus on newspapers or newspaper style of writing	2	12
Lack of career advice	1	8
Other	5	30
<b>Base</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>38</b>

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 29

Notes: respondents who thought that the NCTJ qualification had failed to prepare them well for employment

## Satisfaction with core skills

The core skills of reporting, law, public affairs and shorthand are all considered, on balance, to have been useful in preparing people for work. This is particularly the case for reporting (where 49 per cent found this to be very useful) and law, with average scores of 3.24 and 3.18 respectively, but even for the less well regarded areas of public affairs and shorthand have positive responses. 62 per cent felt that shorthand had been useful in preparing them for work, as did 65 per cent for public affairs.

**Table 34:** How well the core skills elements prepared for employment

	Very useful	Useful	Not very useful	Not at all useful	Average score	Base
	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)		
Reporting	49	34	11	7	<b>3.2</b>	<b>179</b>
Law	41	40	16	3	<b>3.2</b>	<b>185</b>
Shorthand	36	26	16	22	<b>2.8</b>	<b>167</b>
Public affairs	21	44	22	12	<b>2.7</b>	<b>179</b>

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 205

Notes: all respondents who felt able to answer about each core element

As might be expected, those that are working in a journalism-related job generally find that the skills they have learnt on the NCTJ diploma have been more useful in employment than those in non-journalism-related jobs, with the average scores being higher for each of the core skills.

However, it is worth noting that even amongst those who were not in a journalism-related job, significant numbers still find the core skills have been useful in preparing them for employment. So, 67 per cent of those in a non-journalism job found the core skills of reporting useful in preparing them for employment, 54 per cent found law useful, 48 per cent found public affairs useful and 46 per cent found shorthand useful.

**Table 35:** How well the core skills elements prepared for employment

	Very useful	Useful	Not very useful	Not at all useful	Average score	Base
<b>Those in journalism-related job</b>						
	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)		
Reporting	52	35	11	7	<b>3.4</b>	<b>136</b>
Law	49	38	16	3	<b>3.4</b>	<b>138</b>
Shorthand	43	24	16	22	<b>2.9</b>	<b>123</b>
Public affairs	23	45	22	12	<b>2.8</b>	<b>135</b>
<b>Those in non-journalism-related job</b>						
	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)		
Reporting	29	38	25	8	<b>2.9</b>	<b>24</b>
Law	17	38	38	13	<b>2.5</b>	<b>24</b>
Shorthand	17	29	25	29	<b>2.4</b>	<b>24</b>
Public affairs	13	35	39	13	<b>2.5</b>	<b>23</b>

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 205

Notes: all respondents who felt able to answer about each core element

Similarly, each of the optional, specialist skills elements are thought to have been useful, on balance, in preparing individuals for employment. 63 per cent believed that the production journalism element had prepared them well for work, as did 48 per cent of those who took a sports journalism module, 55 per cent of those who took the court reporting module, 49 per cent broadcasting, 55 per cent video journalism and 46 per cent the business of magazines module.

**Table 36:** How well the specialist skills elements prepared for employment

	Very well	Well	Not very well	Not at all	Average score	Base
	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)		
Production journalism	21	43	20	16	<b>2.7</b>	<b>142</b>
Sports journalism	25	23	37	16	<b>2.6</b>	<b>89</b>
Court reporting	24	31	23	22	<b>2.6</b>	<b>180</b>
Broadcast journalism	21	28	28	22	<b>2.5</b>	<b>67</b>
Video journalism	13	42	21	24	<b>2.4</b>	<b>119</b>
Business of magazines	15	31	32	22	<b>2.4</b>	<b>65</b>

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 205

Notes: all respondents who took the specialist optional element

## 6.3 Preparation for further study

Although the NCTJ diploma is not intended to lead to a course of further study, because the HESA research explored this aspect we thought that it would be an interesting point of reference to compare. In the event, 80 per cent of respondents<sup>11</sup> believe that the NCTJ has prepared them well for further study, leading to an overall score of 3.0. HESA finds that 90 per cent of leavers from HE institutions thought that their course had prepared them very well (44 per cent) or well (46 per cent) for further study, giving an overall satisfaction rating of 3.3. 10 per cent thought that their course had not prepared them well or not at all well.

## 6.4 Preparation for self-employment or starting your own business

60 per cent of respondents stated that the NCTJ had prepared them well for self-employment or starting their own business.

**Table 37:** How well the NCTJ qualification prepared respondent for self-employment/freelance work or for starting own business

	Very well	Well	Not very well	Not at all	Average score	Base
	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)		
<b>All</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>121</b>

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. Less than half (46 per cent) of leavers from all HE institutions thought that their course had prepared them well (32 per cent) or very well (14 per cent) for self-employment or starting their own business, leading to an average rating of 2.3. 54 per cent believed that it had not done so, with 28 per cent saying 'not very well' and 26 per cent 'not at all well'.

Those that said that the NCTJ qualification had failed to prepare them well for employment were asked why they thought this was the case. Half stated that it was due to a lack of careers advice per se, 15 per cent that it was due to the course not enabling them to develop contacts, 10 per cent that there was a lack of business or management skill training. Again, these issues do need to be seen in the context of the whole sample. Only eight per cent believe that no careers advice was given, two per cent that there was no development of contacts and two per cent that there was a lack of business management skills training.

<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that the base here is relatively low – many (74 respondents) did not think that this question was relevant to them as they had not started their NCTJ with a view that it would lead to any further study.

**Table 38:** 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 employment
	%	%
No careers advice given	8	45
No development of contacts	2	15
Lack of business management skills training	2	10
Other	5	30
<b>Base</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>35</b>

Source: NCTJ Destination Survey, 2015

Unweighted base = 29

Notes: respondents who thought that the NCTJ qualification had failed to prepare them well for employment

## 6.5 Summary

In the main, those who have completed the NCTJ diploma believe that it prepares them well for what they choose to do next. 77 per cent state that it has prepared them well for employment, 80 per cent that it prepared them well for further study and 60 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.

In more detail, the core skill areas of reporting, law, shorthand and public affairs are all rated highly in having been helpful in preparing respondents for employment. Even amongst those who were not working in a journalistic capacity, high proportions found the journalistic core skills to be still valuable in preparing them for work.





# 7 Discussion and conclusions



This research has followed the post NCTJ examination activities of all those who took the NCTJ diploma examinations. It suggests that:

- employment levels are high. 82 per cent of those who took the NCTJ examinations are in some form of employment at the time of the survey as their main activity – a higher proportion than is suggested by the HESA data exists for those graduating with a degree from a full-time degree course
- relevant employment is high. 79 per cent of those with a job are working in a journalism-related job. This equates to 67 per cent of all those who took the NCTJ examinations. Of course, this may under-estimate 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
- satisfaction with the NCTJ qualification (and by extension, the training that supports it) is high. 77 per cent believed that it prepares them well for work

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 34 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.

The relationship between the attainment of a higher level of diploma (the gold standard) or indeed of completing it (the diploma level) and employment success is complicated. The attributes that led 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, (ii) likelihood of working in a journalism-related job, (iii) working in a more stable permanent contract, in that:

- 96 per cent of those who achieved the gold standard are working, compared to 90 per cent of those with the diploma and 72 per cent for whom the diploma is not yet complete
- 86 per cent of those with gold standard are working in a journalism-related job, compared to 76 per cent of those with diploma standard and 75 per cent of those yet to complete
- 84 per cent of those with the gold standard are working in a permanent contract, or in a fixed-term contract lasting 12 months or longer, compared to 66 per cent of those who have achieved diploma level and 62 per cent of those that have yet to complete

As a further part of this 'positive circle', those who have qualified at higher levels (and as we have seen were more likely to be in a job, a journalism-related job and on a permanent or lengthy contract) were more likely to be positive about the NCTJ experience.

There is frequent debate about the continued usefulness of all the core skills (of reporting, law, public affairs and shorthand) taught on the NCTJ diploma. The results suggest that all are considered to have been useful in preparing them for work. Reporting and law are regarded as most useful, but public affairs and shorthand also receive positive responses – with 62 per cent believing that shorthand has been useful in preparing them for work and 65 per cent stating the same for public affairs. This is itself of interest, but one other result is worth noting: whilst it would be expected that those working in journalism jobs find the core skills to be more useful than those in non-journalism jobs, nearly half (46 per cent) of those working in non-journalism jobs still report that they found shorthand useful in preparing them for work.

# 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 (eg general management, section heads, writers and reporters, etc), but in the actual survey respondents were given examples of typical jobs within the 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
Other		



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