

Coronavirus and the NCTJ: FAQs for candidates

We understand that candidates will be concerned about how the coronavirus pandemic might affect their NCTJ studies and exams.

We are working closely with our centres, and taking advice from our regulators and other public bodies, to plan for a range of scenarios.

We hope the following FAQs will be helpful to candidates. As the coronavirus pandemic is an evolving situation, these FAQs will be updated as required. Any updates will be communicated with centres and candidates.

These FAQs should be read in conjunction with the NCTJ's coronavirus contingency plan. The latest version of the plan can be found on the NCTJ website.

I'm a student on an accredited course, are my exams still going ahead?

NCTJ diploma exams scheduled to take place in 2021-22 will be going ahead as normal. Any centres who cannot run their exams in-centre can opt for their candidates to sit remotely instead. For all exams you should continue to follow the arrangements of your centre. If you have any questions about whether a forthcoming exam is going ahead, you should contact your centre directly.

A special consideration will be given for any individual candidate who is unable to take their exam/assessment for one or more of the following reasons: because they have symptoms of Covid-19; because of restrictions imposed by the pandemic; because they are self-isolating/shielding; because government advice is for them to quarantine in their specific circumstances. Once approved, this will allow your centre to defer your exam sitting to another date in the NCTJ exams calendar at no additional cost.

Will I have time to sit all my exams before my course finishes?

If you are unable to sit exams remotely or in-centre, your centre may move their NCTJ course end date to accommodate any rescheduled exams or late portfolio submissions. This will ensure all candidates have the opportunity to sit exams at a later date and complete their portfolios within the timeframe of their course.

How do I know what arrangements my centre have in place for remote and in-centre training?

You will need to discuss this directly with your centre. Decisions regarding the centre's status (whether they are closed or remain open) and arrangements for remote and in-centre training are made by centres individually and they are responsible for communicating these decisions to their candidates. Our centres are working hard to do the best they can in very difficult circumstances to provide the quality training they are accredited by the NCTJ to deliver.

I'm a distance learner, when will I be able to sit exams?

All diploma national exams in 2021-22 are scheduled to go ahead as planned. The NCTJ is intending to deliver national exams remotely in November/December so candidates can sit their exams securely from home, or in office if this is possible. Remote exams will be available for all diploma subjects, including shorthand. Bookings will be open as normal. The NCTJ is hoping to offer the option of in-centre sittings for national exams in April 2022 onwards.

I'm a trainee journalist, am I still able to sit the NQJ exams in November?

The NQJ exams scheduled for 5 November 2021 are going ahead as planned. The NCTJ is intending to deliver the NQJ exams on 5 November remotely so candidates can sit their exams securely at home, or in-office if this is possible. We will be in touch with NQJ candidates enrolled for the November exams and their editors nearer the time with further details.

Can I still order distance learning materials and books?

Yes, distance learning materials and other shop orders are still being dispatched by post as normal. Please note that postage times may vary.

I'm a Community News Project reporter, how will my training be affected?

Community News Project reporters should continue to follow the guidance of their training providers and employers regarding their training and any forthcoming exams.

I'm completing a junior/senior journalist apprenticeship and I'm worried about doing my end-point assessment journalism project. What should I do?

You should discuss your journalism project with your training provider and/or your employer. You can reschedule your end-point assessment submission if your course end date is extended by your training provider and if your employer approves an extension to your apprenticeship contract.

I'm a Certificate in Foundation Journalism distance learner and I was intending to submit assessments in the upcoming deadline for marking. What should I do if I can't do this because of the coronavirus pandemic?

If you are unable to submit a CFJ assessment for an upcoming marking deadline, you can submit for a later marking deadline instead. The NCTJ has the following upcoming submission deadlines in 2021-22 for CFJ distance learners: 24 September, 26 November, 28 January, 25 March, 27 May, and 29 July. If there are any changes to these dates we will advise distance learners accordingly.

My university has told me their priority is awarding me a journalism degree. Will this be accepted as the equivalent to the diploma by employers if I am unable to return to sit the NCTJ exams/assessments?

The NCTJ does not accept exemptions, equivalences or recognised prior learning for any part of its qualifications. This is to ensure vocational and employer requirements are met, to ensure assessments are fair across all candidates, to maintain the integrity and validity of NCTJ qualifications, and to uphold the industry standard in relation to current journalism practice. Degrees are academic rather than industry standard qualifications and achievement of the Diploma in Journalism, especially at gold standard, is what many journalism employers look for in their recruitment.

The NCTJ is working closely with all our centres to ensure all candidates have the opportunity to complete their diploma qualification.