

**National Council
for the
Training of Journalists**

**NCTJ Level 4
Diploma in Magazine Journalism
Qualification Specification**

603/0340/2
The Register of Regulated Qualifications

NCTJ Training Ltd
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1. Rationale

The vocationally-related NCTJ Level 4 Diploma in Magazine Journalism is a bespoke qualification designed for magazine journalists working for a publisher of specialist titles and will provide learners with an understanding of core journalism skills and areas of knowledge that are particularly relevant to their field. Development of this qualification included consultation with magazine specific industry representatives.

2. Aims and objectives

The qualification will equip magazine journalists with the skills to face day-to-day challenges, fine-tune their strengths, iron out uncertainties and improve any weaknesses. The learning will add value to the job learners are doing each day as magazine journalists.

The specific aims of this programme of study are to ensure learners can demonstrate specialist magazine journalism skills and knowledge in:

- Reporting
- Feature writing
- Production
- Video
- Digital and social media
- Understanding media law and ethics
- Business of magazines

3. Progression

The NCTJ Level 4 Diploma in Magazine Journalism is a bespoke qualification designed for professional magazine journalists working for a publisher of specialist titles. To gain the qualification learners must complete four mandatory assessments gaining grades A-E in each assessment. The four mandatory assessments are: understanding media law and ethics; production journalism, magazine portfolio; and magazine project. Gaining the diploma provides continuing professional development for professional magazine journalists working for a publisher of specialist titles.

4. Target groups and entry details

The programme of study provides opportunities for learners who are already engaged in careers as professional magazine journalists. Because of the academic standards expected by the industry, the minimum age for entry is 18 years. The minimum requirement learners to have completed is five GCSEs (at level 4 or grade C and above) or equivalent. NCTJ entry requirements are intended to ensure that there are no barriers to restrict access and progression and equal opportunities exist for all learners. Learners with particular educational needs are not targeted separately although special provision may be made for them.

5. Total qualification time

Total qualification time (TQT) aims to provide learners with an indication of the minimum length of time it would take an average learner to complete this qualification.

TQT is made up of two components:

- 1) Guided learning: activities completed by the learner under the direct instruction or supervision of a tutor, trainer or other appropriate provider of education or training.
- 2) All other hours spent in preparation, study or training, including assessment time, but not under the direct supervision of a tutor, trainer or other appropriate training provider.

This syllabus incorporates a programme of study that includes an estimated 100 hours guided learning (the estimated minimum time an average learner may expect to spend under direct instruction or supervision of a tutor or trainer).

An average learner can also reasonably expect to spend an estimated 110 hours in preparation, study or any other form of participation in education or training, including assessment, which takes place as directed by a tutor, trainer or other appropriate training provider.

TQT

The total qualification time an average learner can expect to take to complete the qualification is 210 hours.

Coursework will be set and marked by approved trainers and/or tutors. The coursework will incorporate practical tasks based in the classroom and/or in the workplace covering the areas outlined in the programme of study.

6. Assessment

There are four mandatory assessments including examinations, portfolio and a project. Assessment criteria, how marks are awarded and grade descriptors on which learners' levels of attainment will be differentiated are described in the programme of study which will be read by the learner alongside this specification. The assessment criteria for each subject clearly specify the standard that the learner is expected to meet in order to demonstrate that the learning outcomes have been achieved. All assessments in this qualification follow the NCTJ's robust quality assurance processes and procedures as per the requirements for a regulated qualification according to the regulators' conditions of recognition.

7. Overall grading and specified levels of attainment

To pass the NCTJ Diploma in Magazine Journalism, learners must gain grades A-E in each of the four mandatory assessments. Learners who gain grades A-C in all assessments will be awarded the industry 'gold standard' which is stated on the certificate.

Grading of A-E is awarded within the qualification for each assessment. The criteria against which individual performance within the qualification and assessments is differentiated is specified in the grade descriptors in the programme of study which will be read by the learner alongside this specification.

The grading scale used to signify performance differentiation within the qualification and units is A-E grades with C grade being the industry standard for each unit and F grade being a fail. No overall grade is awarded for this qualification.

Grades	Content and Characteristics	Examples and Application
A (70+) Excellent	The candidate has an excellent knowledge which they demonstrate in practical work to achieve the learning outcomes. The candidate demonstrates excellent knowledge and understanding of professional methods.	In-depth understanding, exploration, insight and/or research. All specifications for the assessment task, including word limit/time limit where appropriate, have been adhered to. The work has been approached and/or executed/performed in an original way. Insightful contextualisation, including relevant theory/ literature/ artefacts/ performance. Evidence of high to very high-quality analysis, synthesis, evaluation and critical appraisal.

<p>B (60-69) Good</p>	<p>The candidate has a good knowledge which they demonstrate in practical work to achieve the learning outcomes. The candidate demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of professional methods.</p>	<p>Good to very good understanding and exploration, some insight and/or thorough research. No significant inaccuracies, misunderstandings or errors. The specifications for the assessment task, including word limit/time limit where appropriate, have been adhered to. The work has been approached and/or executed/performed in a comprehensive and appropriate way. Appropriate contextualisation, including relevant theory/ literature/ artefacts/performance. Evidence of high-quality analysis, synthesis, evaluation and critical appraisal.</p>
<p>C (50-59) Satisfactory</p>	<p>The candidate has a satisfactory knowledge which they demonstrate in practical work to achieve the learning outcomes. The candidate demonstrates satisfactory knowledge and understanding of professional methods.</p>	<p>Sound understanding and exploration, some insight and/or appropriate research. No significant inaccuracies and/or misunderstandings. No significant aberrations from the specifications for the assessment task, including word limit/time limit where appropriate. The work has been approached and/or executed/performed in a standard way. Sound analysis, synthesis, evaluation and critical appraisal. Demonstrates some levels of initiative, personal responsibility, decision-making and achievement.</p>
<p>D (40-49) Limited</p>	<p>The candidate has a limited knowledge which is demonstrated in practical work to achieve the learning outcomes. There may be errors. The candidate demonstrates a limited knowledge and understanding of professional methods.</p>	<p>Adequate understanding and/or exploration of major ideas with little insight and/or minimal research. Some minor inaccuracies and/or misunderstandings. Some minor aberrations from the specifications for the assessment task, including word limit/time limit where appropriate. The work has been approached and/or executed/performed in a basic and/or poor way. Some, but limited, evidence of analysis, synthesis, evaluation and critical appraisal.</p>
<p>E (30-39) Poor</p>	<p>The candidate has a poor knowledge which they demonstrate in practical work to achieve the learning outcomes. There may be errors which may alter understanding. The candidate demonstrates poor knowledge and understanding of professional methods.</p>	<p>Limited understanding and/or exploration of major ideas with very little insight and/or minimal research. Some significant inaccuracies and/or misunderstandings. Insufficient attention paid to some of the assessment criteria and some significant aberrations from the specifications for the assessment task. The work has been approached and/or executed/performed in a poor way. Insufficient evidence of analysis, synthesis, evaluation and critical appraisal.</p>
<p>F (0-29) Fail</p>	<p>The candidate has little or no relevant knowledge of the subject and fails to demonstrate the principles in practical work. Work will be error strewn. The candidate does not demonstrate knowledge and understanding of professional methods.</p>	<p>Very little or no relevant understanding and/or exploration of major ideas with little or no insight and/or minimal research. Several significant inaccuracies and/or misunderstandings. Insufficient attention paid to several of the assessment criteria and some serious deviations from the specifications for the assessment task. The work has been approached and/or executed/performed inadequately. Little or no evidence of analysis, synthesis, evaluation and critical appraisal.</p>

8. Availability of examinations and assessments

Trainers and/or tutors are required to provide learners with information and advice on the programme of study, the level of demand and associated requirements and expectations. The NCTJ reserves the right to decline entry to an examination where previous qualifications and experience are deemed to be inadequate. Further details are available on the NCTJ website.

9. Duration of examination

All examinations are structured so that the duration of each examination provides opportunities for all learners to demonstrate achievement within a set time-frame.

10. Fair access to assessment

Information on assessment and examination and entry requirements for learners with particular needs is published in the 'Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy'. A copy of this policy is available from NCTJ Training Ltd, The New Granary, Station Road, Newport, Saffron Walden, Essex CB11 3PL and is also provided on the company's website: www.nctj.com

11. Validity

The general syllabus for the NCTJ Level 4 Diploma in Magazine Journalism is valid until 30 August 2024.

12. Repeats of examinations

Where a learner is not able to reach the minimum standard in an examination, application for re-examination at that level is permitted.

13. Issue of results

Results will normally be issued within five weeks of the date of the examination. This time is necessary to ensure that all results are properly standardised and checked by the NCTJ. Certificates will normally be issued within six weeks of the course end date.

14. Language and bias

Every effort has been made to ensure that this syllabus and associated mark schemes, procedures and materials are free from any form of bias, refer to explicit content and have no hidden requirements for entry or assessment.

Care has been taken to ensure that the programme of study, grade descriptions and examination components make appropriate demands on learners both in terms of their physical safety, well-being and expectations of physical and cognitive performance in relation to their age and level of ability.

15. Confidentiality

In order to ensure that the NCTJ Diploma in Magazine Journalism qualification reflects an accurate measure of attainment, the NCTJ will take all reasonable steps to ensure that such confidentiality is maintained.

Where any breach of such confidentiality (including through the loss or theft of assessment materials) is either suspected by the NCTJ or alleged by any other person, the NCTJ will investigate that breach.

16. Learner registrations

Each learner that registers with the NCTJ to take the Diploma in Magazine Journalism qualification is uniquely identified by a Unique Reference Number (URN) generated by the NCTJ's database of learner records. Centres enrolling learners to take an NCTJ qualification are responsible for confirming the identity of the learner when they are enrolled. Learners

registered with FE course providers are also given a Personal Learner Record (PLR) which the NCTJ supplies the relevant data to the Learning Records Service.

17. Qualification specification

To gain the Diploma in Magazine Journalism, learners must gain grades A-E in four mandatory assessments:

1 Understanding media law and ethics exam

The scope and depth of knowledge expected of candidates in the exam is indicated by the detail (and case examples) included in the text of the 22nd edition of *McNae's Essential Law for Journalists* and its website, and in the Editors' Code of Practice. Candidates will not be required to quote verbatim from Ipso or Ofcom adjudications in their answers to examination questions but will receive 'other valid points' credit for discernible references to relevant adjudication(s).

2 Production journalism exam

Candidates will sit a 2 ½ hours on-screen exam to demonstrate they can: edit and manipulate copy in a desktop publishing programme; edit a variety of stories in print or online, identifying the relevant facts and spotting the best angle; rewrite, if necessary, so that it creates an interesting first paragraph that will hold the reader's attention and ensure the structure of the story is presented in a logical, readable style that makes every word count; place quotes appropriately to give pace to the story; ensure stories meet style guidelines, are grammatically correct, accurate, legally and ethically sound and free of ambiguity; check facts swiftly and know the procedures for reporting issues where a senior member of staff is required to make a decision of judgement; tighten, trim or rewrite a story to a word count, free from widows and orphans and to deadline; write an online headline for a variety of stories including online headlines using search engine optimisation; proof-read on hard copy; and crop a picture story and write a call to action to drive traffic to the website.

3 Magazine portfolio

The portfolio brings together a range of skills learned on the course. The portfolio is an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their professionalism by submitting ten pieces of quality work that meet the following requirements:

- At least one piece of work must be a minimum 300-word feature that contains information gained from one or more interviews
- At least one piece of work must be an item which demonstrates the candidate's ability to be a mobile journalist
- One piece of work may be an audio feature or a video feature (additional to the above) of 1 – 2½ minutes duration
- At least one feature must be based on based on a 'real life' interview (either face-to-face or on the phone)
- At least one feature must be a piece of analysis showing the candidate's ability to gather, use and present data
- Up to two portfolio items may be subbed double page spreads which could include news, features and/or analysis.

4 Business of magazines project

Candidates will prepare a detailed plan for the launch of a magazine. Detailed plans will include marketing strategy, revenue streams, finances, distribution, editorial policy (print, online and social media), brand identity and strategy. They will consider:

- Case studies of editorial strategies and their development online/digitally
- Identifying the reader and learning about them
- Using databases and research to define readers' attitudes and lifestyles

- Establishing the 'tone of voice' of a magazine, exploring brand identity and identifying emerging trends
- How an editorial strategy fits into the overall marketing strategy for a magazine.

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