



**National Council
for the
Training of Journalists**

**NCTJ Level 5
Certificate in Professional Sports
Journalism
Qualification Specification**

Qualification No: 603/3241/4
The Register of Regulated Qualifications

NCTJ Training Ltd
The New Granary
Station Road
Newport
Saffron Walden
Essex
CB11 3PL

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1. Rationale

The vocationally-related NCTJ Level 5 Certificate in Professional Sports Journalism is a bespoke qualification designed for professional sports journalists working for a broadcast media organisation. Development of this qualification included consultation with professional sports broadcasting industry representatives.

2. Objectives

The qualification will equip sports journalists with an understanding of the digital skills and knowledge required in an increasingly complex sports media landscape. The learning will add value to the job of a sports journalist and grow the breadth, depth and insight of sports journalism provided by media organisations. It will also challenge journalists to reflect upon their professional practice and consider the social and ethical responsibilities within the job.

3. Progression

Gaining the qualification provides continuing professional development for sport journalists working for a broadcast media organisation.

4. Target groups and entry details

The programme of study provides opportunities for journalists who are already engaged in careers as professional sports journalists. Because of the academic standards expected by the industry, the minimum age for entry is 18 years. The minimum requirement for entry 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 60 hours guided learning (the estimated minimum time an average learner may expect to spend under direct instruction or supervision of a tutor or trainer, including the assessment).

An average learner can also reasonably expect to spend an estimated 100 hours in preparation, study or any other form of participation in education or training, 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 160 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

Learners will sit a two-part professional sports journalism examination set, marked, and moderated by NCTJ examiners.

A total of 200 marks are available for the examination (100 marks per part) and final marks will be added together and divided by two for the overall result with a half mark being rounded up to the nearest whole mark.

The following grades are awarded: Pass, Merit, or Distinction. Learners must achieve a minimum of 50 marks in each part of the exam to gain an overall Pass grade. If a learner fails to achieve 50 marks in one part of the exam, they will be able to re-sit the relevant part.

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 grade descriptors clearly specify the standard that the learner is expected to meet in order to demonstrate that the learning outcomes have been achieved. The assessment in this qualification follows the NCTJ's robust quality assurance processes and procedures as per the requirements for a regulated qualification according to the regulators' conditions of recognition.

In addition to the exams, learners will be set formative exercises throughout the diploma that help learners to assess development and identify both strengths and areas that need improvement. However, these practice exercises do not contribute to the final grade awarded.

7. Overall grading and specified levels of attainment

Learners must achieve a minimum of 50 marks in part one and 50 marks in part two of the exam to gain an overall grade. Learners must achieve a minimum 100 marks out a possible 200 marks to gain a Pass. Grades are awarded for the Certificate in Professional Sports Journalism based on the following overall marks achieved:

70+	marks -	Distinction
60-69	marks -	Merit
50-59	marks -	Pass

The grading scale used to signify performance differentiation within the qualification is Pass, Merit or Distinction which will be awarded as an overall grade.

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 5 Certificate in Professional Sports Journalism is valid until 30 September 2024. We monitor the validity of this qualification annually ensuring that the qualification continues to meet the needs of users, learners and employers. Methods used to support this strategy include:

- Monitoring outcomes from quality assurance visits to centres
- Monitoring outcomes from quality assurance standardisation activities i.e. marking and moderation
- Review of malpractice and/or maladministration investigations
- Review of complaints
- Review of enquiries and appeals
- Review of requests for reasonable adjustments and/or special considerations
- Review of feedback from centres, employers, learners and any other stakeholders
- Consultation/survey activities with users
- Review of progression details
- Review of exam questions and performance
- Assessment comparability of findings if and when applicable.

12. Repeats of examinations

Where a learner is not able to reach the minimum standard in the examination, application for re-examination at that level is permitted. If a learner fails to achieve 50 marks in one part of the exam only, they will only need to re-sit that part.

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 Certificate in Professional Sports Journalism 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 Certificate in Professional Sports Journalism 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 an Individual Learner Record (ILR) for which the NCTJ supplies the relevant data to the Learning Records Service.

17. Qualification specification

The two-part exam will test a range of journalism and critical thinking skills. Learners must exercise news judgment, style, structure, accuracy and writing to length in their journalism. Learners are expected to demonstrate knowledge, understanding and application in their critical thinking.

Part 1 exam

Learners are given a range of scenario-based decision-making, reporting and critical discussion exercises in the following areas: Ethics, Freedom of Information (FOI), data journalism, investigative journalism, digital and social media, and critical issues in sports journalism.

Part 2 exam

Learners are given a range of scenario-based decision-making, reporting and critical discussion exercises in the following areas: Sports history/politics, social issues in sports reporting, sports business, sports governance, sports law, key sports issues, and media regulation.

18. Grade descriptors

Distinction 70+ per cent

Demonstrates excellent practical, theoretical and technological knowledge and understanding of a subject or field of work to find ways forward in broadly defined, complex contexts. Excellent at analysing, interpreting and evaluating relevant information, concepts and ideas. Shows excellent awareness of the nature and scope of the area of study or work. Demonstrates excellent understanding of different perspectives, approaches and schools of thought and the reasoning behind them.

Merit 60-69 per cent

Demonstrates good practical, theoretical and technological knowledge and understanding of a subject or field of work to find ways forward in broadly defined, complex contexts. Good at analysing, interpreting and evaluating relevant information, concepts and ideas. Shows good awareness of the nature and scope of the area of study or work. Demonstrates good understanding of different perspectives, approaches and schools of thought and the reasoning behind them.

Pass 50-59 per cent

Demonstrates satisfactory practical, theoretical and technological knowledge and understanding of a subject or field of work to find ways forward in broadly defined, complex contexts. Satisfactory at analysing, interpreting and evaluating relevant information, concepts and ideas. Shows satisfactory awareness of the nature and scope of the area of study or work. Demonstrates satisfactory understanding of different perspectives, approaches and schools of thought and the reasoning behind them.

Fail 0-49 per cent

Demonstrates limited, poor or no relevant practical, theoretical and technological knowledge and understanding of a subject or field of work to find ways forward in broadly defined, complex contexts. Demonstrates limited, poor or no relevant knowledge or ability at analysing, interpreting and evaluating relevant information, concepts and ideas. Shows limited, poor or no relevant awareness of the nature and scope of the area of study or work. Demonstrates limited, poor or no relevant understanding of different perspectives, approaches and schools of thought and the reasoning behind them.