

**National Council for the
Training of Journalists**

**NCTJ Level 6
National Qualification in Journalism
Qualification Specification**

Qualification No: 603/3168/9

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

1. Rationale

The Level 6 National Qualification in Journalism (NQJ) is designed to examine all-round competence in a range of knowledge and skills at a level appropriate to a senior journalist who has completed a formative training programme, including a properly supervised period of practical training. The development of this qualification included consultation with industry representatives and the award is recognised by employers as an industry standard for a senior journalist.

2. Aims and objectives

The qualification aims to meet the needs of employers and to provide trainee or junior journalists with the knowledge and skills required for a senior journalist working across the media sector. The fundamental skills of high quality journalism are at the heart of the Level 6 National Qualification in Journalism. Leading media employers were consulted on the structure and content of the qualification.

3. Progression

The level 6 National Qualification in Journalism is an industry recognised qualification. To gain the NQJ candidates must complete three assessments gaining a minimum mark of 60 per cent in each: media law and ethics in practice online exam; e-logbook of evidence; and a practical skills-based online exam. Gaining the qualification provides continuing professional development for a trainee or junior journalist to progress to a senior journalist.

4. Target groups and entry details

This syllabus provides opportunities for continuing professional development for trainee or junior journalists who are already engaged in careers as professional journalists. To be eligible to sit the NQJ, it is recommended that candidates have completed the NCTJ Diploma in Journalism or gained a degree (in any subject) or completed a junior journalist apprenticeship. The NQJ can be entered for after eighteen months employment within the industry (or a minimum twelve months in exceptional circumstances). Sector specific and/or individual employer requirements may also apply.

NCTJ entry requirements are intended to ensure that there are no barriers to restrict access and progression and equal opportunities exist for all candidates. Candidates 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 candidates with an indication of the minimum length of time it would take an average candidate to complete this qualification.

TQT is made up of two components:

- 1) Guided learning: activities completed by the candidate 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 304 hours guided learning (*the estimated minimum time an average candidate may expect to spend under direct instruction or supervision of a tutor or trainer*).

An average candidate can also reasonably expect to spend an estimated 290 hours in preparation, study or any other form of participation in education or training, including assessment, which takes place as directed by, but not under direct supervision of a tutor, trainer or other appropriate training provider.

The total qualification time an average candidate can expect to take to complete the qualification is 594 hours.

6. Assessment

There are three online assessments: media law and ethics in practice exam; e-logbook of evidence; and a practical skills-based exam. To gain the qualification, candidates must achieve a minimum 60 per cent mark for each assessment. The final percentages in each section will be aggregated and divided by three to establish an overall percentage. Any half mark will be rounded up. An overall grade will be awarded: Pass, Merit or Distinction.

Assessment criteria, how marks are awarded and grade descriptors on which candidates' levels of attainment will be differentiated are described in the programme of study which will be read by the candidate alongside this specification. The grade descriptors for each assessment clearly specify the standard that the candidate 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.

7. Overall grading and specified levels of attainment

An overall grade of Pass, Merit or Distinction will be awarded for the NQJ. Candidates must achieve a minimum of 60 marks in each of the three assessments to gain a Pass. Final marks in each section will be expressed as a percentage. The final percentages in each section will be aggregated and divided by three to establish an overall percentage. Any half mark will be rounded up.

The grading scale used to signify performance differentiation within the qualification is Pass, Merit or Distinction which will be awarded as an overall grade. Grades are awarded for the Level 6 National Qualification in Journalism based on the following overall percentage marks achieved:

70+	per cent	-	Distinction
65-69	per cent	-	Merit
60-64	per cent	-	Pass

8. Availability of examinations and assessments

Trainers and/or tutors are required to provide candidates 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. Opportunities to sit the exams are currently available three times a year. Further details are available on the NCTJ website.

9. Duration of examinations

All examinations are structured so that the duration of each examination provides opportunities for all candidates to demonstrate achievement within a set time-frame. Time allowed for media law and ethics in practice is: 2 hours; and the practical skills-based exam is 2 hours and 30 minutes.

10. Fair access to assessment

Information on assessment and examination and entry requirements for candidates 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 published on the NCTJ website: www.nctj.com

11. Validity of syllabus

The general syllabus for the NQJ is valid until 29 August 2025. We monitor the validity of this qualification annually ensuring that the qualification continues to meet the needs of users, candidates, 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, Candidates 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 candidate is not able to reach the minimum standard in each of the three assessments, application for re-examination of that particular assessment is permitted i.e. if a candidate fails to achieve 60 marks in one of the assessments, they will only need to re-sit that section.

13. Issue of results

Results will normally be issued within five weeks of the date of the final assessment. 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 or within six weeks of notification of the result.

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 candidates 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 NQJ 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. Candidate registrations

Each candidate that registers to take the NQJ is uniquely identified by a Unique Reference Number (URN) generated by the NCTJ's database of candidate records. Training providers enrolling candidates to take an NCTJ qualification are responsible for confirming the identity of the candidate when they are enrolled. Candidates registered with training providers may be given an Individual Candidate Record (ILR) for which the NCTJ supplies the relevant data to the Learning Records Service.

17. Qualification specification

The NQJ is designed to examine all-round competence in a range of knowledge and skills at a level appropriate to a senior journalist who has completed a formative training programme, including a supervised period of practical training. Each assessment in the Level 6 National Qualification in Journalism has a specific purpose:

Media law and ethics in practice

This is an online exam in which candidates must demonstrate that they are conversant with day-to-day practice inside and outside the office, have a sound working knowledge and understanding of practical journalism enabling them to respond to any given editorial situation, are able to apply the principles of media law, regulation and ethical practice, and can brief senior and junior colleagues in clear, concise terms.

E-logbook for journalists

The object of the logbook is to ensure that candidates gain sufficient experience and on-the-job training during the first eighteen months at work (or a minimum of twelve months) to prepare them to take the NQJ exams with confidence.

Practical skills-based exam

This will be a major piece of journalism, based on an unfolding story, which may have unpredictable twists and turns. Candidates will receive a flow of material during the course of exam, which will be sat online. The information will come via social media, press releases, video statements. Candidates will be required to carry out various publishing tasks during the course of the exam. This assessment will be tailored to different media sectors.

18. Grade descriptors

Distinction

70+ per cent

All work has consistently reached exacting standards to meet the learning outcomes. Sophisticated and expert theoretical and technical knowledge has been demonstrated in practical and complex contexts. Consistently excellent at analysing, interpreting and evaluating relevant information, concepts and ideas. Shows outstanding 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

65-69 per cent

All work has reached good standards to meet the learning outcomes. A very good grasp of theoretical and technical knowledge has been demonstrated in practical and complex contexts. Consistently 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

60-64 per cent

All work has met the learning outcomes. A satisfactory grasp of theoretical and technical knowledge has been demonstrated in practical and complex contexts. Consistently 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 an understanding of different perspectives, approaches and schools of thought and the reasoning behind them.

Fail**0-59 per cent**

Has not met all the learning outcomes. 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.

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