

**National Council for the  
Training of Journalists**

**NCTJ Level 5  
Qualification in Practical International  
Journalism  
Qualification Specification**

Qualification No: 603/4138/5

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## **1. Rationale**

The NCTJ Level 5 Qualification in Practical International Journalism (PIJ) is designed to provide competence in the core elements of being a practical journalist operating in an international arena and is primarily aimed at non-native English speakers. It may also be studied by candidates with English as their first language, but it does not prepare them for work as a journalist in the UK. The development of this qualification included consultation with industry representatives and educational experts in the field of international journalism.

## **2. Aims and objectives**

The qualification aims to meet the needs of employers and to provide trainee journalists operating in an international arena with the knowledge and skills required for a journalist working outside of the UK.

## **3. Progression**

The level 5 Qualification in Practical International Journalism is a vocationally-related qualification. To gain the qualification candidates must successfully complete a portfolio of evidence. Gaining the qualification provides opportunities for candidates to operate effectively as a journalist in an international arena.

## **4. Target groups and entry details**

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. This qualification is designed for candidates with a minimum English language standard of 6 IELTS or an equivalent.

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 390 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 210 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 600 hours.

## **6. Assessment**

Assessment will be through a single online portfolio of five real-world published stories in formats chosen by the candidate which may include: digital; print; video; audio; broadcast;

and documentary. The aim of the e-portfolio assessment is to ensure candidates can write, shoot or record engaging, accurate, well-balanced and ethically sound stories that have an international dimension using independent research and interview skills. Candidates will gain a grade A-E based on the overall mark achieved which will be listed on their certificate on successful completion of the qualification.

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 (see point 7 below). 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. Grade descriptors

Grades	Content and Characteristics	Examples and Application
<b>A (70+)</b> <b>Excellent</b>	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 when meeting learning outcomes.	The candidate's work is excellent throughout and clearly demonstrates the knowledge and skills demanded by the practical international journalism programme. The candidate demonstrates an <b>excellent</b> standard in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>the angles chosen to tell stories</b> – they are tightly written/produced and well-structured, intros/openings carry impact through the choice of words/video or audio, the key quotes have been selected, used accurately and attributed correctly</li> <li>• <b>the use of digital techniques and social media</b> – excellent use is made of available social media platforms and analytics programs, combined with excellent writing/ production skills and understanding of photography</li> <li>• <b>identifying how to develop stories</b> – the correct sources are identified, lines of questioning are excellent</li> <li>• <b>the understanding of ethical issues</b> – an excellent understanding of ethical issues, applied and explained</li> <li>• <b>media law and international affairs</b> – an excellent understanding of issues relating to media law and international affairs</li> <li>• <b>the quality of writing and standard of English</b> – only minor corrections may be needed in a published version</li> </ul>
<b>B (60-69)</b> <b>Good</b>	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	The candidate's work is good throughout and demonstrates the knowledge and skills demanded by the practical international journalism programme. The candidate demonstrates a <b>good</b> standard in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>the angles chosen to tell stories</b> – they are tightly written/produced and there are examples of good phrasing/shooting. Intros/openings carry impact. The most appropriate quotes have been selected, used accurately and attributed correctly</li> <li>• <b>the use of digital techniques and social media</b> – good use is made of an appropriate range of platforms and programs,</li> </ul>

	professional methods when meeting learning outcomes	<p>combined with good writing/production skills and understanding of photography</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>identifying how to develop stories</b> – the correct sources are identified; good lines of questioning have been developed</li> <li>• <b>the understanding of ethical issues</b> – a good understanding of ethical issues, applied and explained</li> <li>• <b>media law and international affairs</b> – a good understanding of issues relating to media law and international affairs</li> <li>• <b>the quality of writing and standard of English</b> – few minor corrections would be needed before publication, in terms of style but not substance</li> </ul>
<b>C (50-59) Satisfactory</b>	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 when meeting learning outcomes.	<p>The candidate’s work is satisfactory throughout and demonstrates the knowledge and skills demanded by the practical international journalism programme.</p> <p>The candidate demonstrates a <b>satisfactory</b> standard in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>the angles chosen to tell stories</b> – they are well written/produced with examples of satisfactory phrasing/shooting. Intros/openings encapsulate the story and the angle chosen. Appropriate quotes have been selected, used accurately and attributed correctly</li> <li>• <b>the use of digital techniques and social media</b> – satisfactory use is made of most of the available platforms and programs, combined with satisfactory writing/production skills and understanding of photography</li> <li>• <b>identifying how to develop stories</b> – there is sufficient underpinning knowledge to broadly identify who to interview to elicit information that could be used to produce a useable story</li> <li>• <b>the understanding of ethical issues</b> – a satisfactory understanding of ethical issues, applied and explained</li> <li>• <b>media law and international affairs</b> – a satisfactory understanding of issues relating to media law and international affairs</li> <li>• <b>the writing and standard of English</b> – some corrections may be needed before publication, in terms of style but not substance</li> </ul>
<b>D (40-49) Limited</b>	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 when	<p>The candidate’s work is limited throughout when demonstrating the knowledge and skills demanded by the practical international journalism programme.</p> <p>The candidate demonstrates a <b>limited</b> standard in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>the angles chosen to tell stories</b> – the angle chosen is not one with the most impact and the intro/opening may have a disjointed structure. There is little active pace. There are not enough quotes and ones used are not the most appropriate</li> <li>• <b>the use of digital techniques and social media</b> – better use could have been made of digital techniques and social media. Writing/production techniques may have not matched the platforms and there is a limited understanding of photography</li> <li>• <b>identifying how to develop stories</b> – there is insufficient underpinning knowledge to broadly identify who to interview</li> </ul>

	meeting learning outcomes.	<p>and to elicit information that could be used to produce a useable story</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>the understanding of ethical issues</b> – ethical issues are not well understood or applied appropriately</li> <li>• <b>media law and international affairs</b> – a limited understanding of issues relating to media law and international affairs</li> <li>• <b>the writing and standard of English</b> – some re-writing will be required before publication</li> </ul>
<b>E (30-39) Poor</b>	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 when meeting learning outcomes.	<p>The candidate's work is poor throughout and mostly fails to demonstrate the knowledge and skills demanded by the practical international journalism programme.</p> <p>The candidate will demonstrate a <b>poor</b> standard in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>the angles chosen to tell stories</b> – the angle and intro/opening have little or no impact. The story has little or no structure. There is no active pace and there are not</li> <li>• enough quotes and ones used are mainly not appropriate and may be inaccurate</li> <li>• <b>the use of digital techniques and social media</b> – use of digital techniques and social media show little or no understanding of the knowledge, skills and techniques needed. Writing/production and photography were unsuitable for the platforms chosen</li> <li>• <b>identifying how to develop stories</b> – there is poor knowledge to identify who to interview and to elicit information that could be used to produce a useable story</li> <li>• <b>the understanding of ethical issues</b> – ethical understanding was weak and not appropriately applied</li> <li>• <b>media law and international affairs</b> – a poor understanding of issues relating to media law and international affairs</li> <li>• <b>the writing and standard of English</b> – re-writing will be required before publication</li> </ul>
<b>F (0-29) Fail</b>	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 and does not meet the learning outcomes.	<p>The candidate's work fails to demonstrate the knowledge and skills demanded by the practical international journalism programme.</p> <p>The candidate <b>fails</b> in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>the angles chosen to tell stories</b> – the angle chosen has no impact. The intro/opening and story are clumsy, the story has no structure. There are no quotes or the quotes used have major inaccuracies that alter the meaning. The copy/production would not be acceptable for publication</li> <li>• <b>the use of digital techniques and social media</b> – use of digital techniques and social media showed no understanding of the knowledge, skills and techniques needed. Writing/production techniques and photography did not match the platforms</li> <li>• <b>identifying how to develop stories</b> – interviewees were not identified and no strategy in place to conduct interviews</li> <li>• <b>the understanding of ethical issues</b> – there is no understanding or application of the ethical issues</li> <li>• <b>media law and international affairs</b> – no understanding of issues relating to media law and international affairs</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>the writing and standard of English</b> – the writing style is disjointed, lacks cohesion and there is poor sentence construction</li> </ul>
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## 8. Overall grading and specified levels of attainment

There is a total of 100 marks available. Grades will be awarded as follows:

A	-	70+	marks
B	-	60-69	marks
C	-	50-59	marks
D	-	40-49	marks
E	-	30-39	marks
Fail	-	0-29	marks

Candidates who fail the qualification will not be awarded a certificate.

## 9. 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 assessment where previous qualifications and experience are deemed to be inadequate.

## 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](http://www.nctj.com)

## 11. Validity of syllabus

The general syllabus for the qualification 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
- Assessment comparability of findings if and when applicable.

## 12. Repeats of assessment

Where a candidate is not able to reach the minimum standard in the portfolio assessment, application for re-submission of that particular assessment is permitted i.e. if a candidate fails to achieve 30 marks for the portfolio.

### **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 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. Candidate registrations**

Each candidate that registers to take the Qualification in Practical International Journalism 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 Learner Record (ILR) for which the NCTJ supplies the relevant data to the Learning Records Service.

### **17. Qualification specification**

When the portfolio is completed it will include: five pieces of journalism, presented on any platform. Skills and knowledge learnt are applied in the researching and telling of stories on different platforms. The content will reflect the candidate's multi-platform international journalism skills they have gained through learning this programme of study. Each submission must have an international dimension and will be accompanied by a brief coversheet, providing students with the opportunity to describe their core story-telling skills. Candidates will also demonstrate knowledge and understanding of social media, photography, video and audio skills, as well as ethics, media law, and international organisations.

The portfolio assessment provides evidence that the candidate has undertaken a range of work on different platforms, as part of coursework or during work experience, which has been assessed and on which constructive feedback has been given.