

Destinations of NCTJ Diploma in Journalism students


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April 2024



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Executive Summary

1. Background

As individuals have invested their time and money in gaining an NCTJ diploma qualification, it is appropriate that they know what impact their investment will have. They should know whether the diploma is likely to lead to employment, whether it will increase their chances of getting the type of job they want and what level of salary they may earn. To answer these information needs, the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) has commissioned this report examining the 'destinations' of people who have studied for the NCTJ Diploma in Journalism.

This report is based on a survey of NCTJ diploma 'graduates' who have completed their NCTJ diploma course. The research approach is based on that used by the UK's Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA), which conducts a regular Graduate Outcomes survey at 15 months after they have graduated from a UK higher education institution. Combining our own survey data with that from HESA allows us to benchmark the post-qualification activities of the NCTJ diploma students with national averages.

The survey covers all those who completed a course of study, regardless of whether they attained the NCTJ diploma or not. We have three 'attainment' levels – gold standard, diploma and incomplete (for those yet to complete the NCTJ diploma). As would be expected, response rate to the surveys and labour market outcomes are correlated to these attainment levels and so we have weighted the responses to reflect qualification attainment levels.

2. Current activities of NCTJ diploma graduates

Eighty-eight per cent of those who had studied for the NCTJ diploma (whether they achieved the qualification or not) were in work at the time of the follow-up survey. This is higher than the 76 per cent of leavers from UK higher education courses across all subjects and higher than the 80 per cent employment rate for all journalism students leaving higher education.

The higher the level of attainment of the NCTJ diploma, the more likely it is that the individual will be in employment – 94 per cent of those who attained the gold standard were working, compared to 89 per cent of those who attained the diploma standard and 85 per cent of those yet to complete their diploma.

3. Working as a journalist

Seventy-four per cent of the NCTJ diploma graduates who were working were in a journalism-related job.

The likelihood of having gained a journalism-related job varies according to the level of qualification obtained. Those with gold standard were more likely to be in a journalism-related job (88 per cent) when compared to those who had the diploma level (79 per cent) and 67 per cent of those who did not complete the diploma.

The HESA data shows among those who had graduated in journalism, 28 per cent were working in a journalism occupation, 13 per cent in another 'media professional' role and 59 per cent were working in non-journalism roles.

Fifty-seven per cent of NCTJ respondents said they needed their NCTJ diploma to get the job they were doing, with 20 per cent stating it was a formal requirement and 37 per cent saying it was not a formal requirement but it was an advantage. Forty-two per cent thought it was 'not required' by their employer. Among those in journalism jobs 73 per cent stated having the diploma was required (with 27 per cent stating it was a formal requirement and 46 per cent an advantage).

The majority (67 per cent) of NCTJ diploma graduates in work were engaged in the creative media sectors – 33 per cent in newspapers, 10 per cent in magazines, seven per cent in television, six per cent in radio and 11 per cent in PR and corporate communications. A third (33 per cent) were working in other sectors of the economy, such as the health, education, hospitality and retail sectors.

This data also suggests those working as journalists are receiving comparable salaries to other graduates. The median salary for those working after their NCTJ diploma is in the range of £24,999 – £29,999, the same as for all HESA graduates. Wages for NCTJ diploma graduates were higher for (i) those with a gold standard diploma, (ii) those in journalism compared to non-journalism jobs and (iii) those working in broadcasting (TV and radio).

The main reason why NCTJ diploma graduates accepted the job they were doing was because it fitted into their career plan or was exactly the type of work they wanted (54 per cent). Relatively few cited 'practical' reasons: it was the best offer they received (eight per cent) or in order to earn a living (eight per cent). Diploma graduates in journalism jobs are more likely to say it fitted into their career plan or was exactly the kind of work they wanted than those in non-journalism jobs (62 per cent compared to 29 per cent). Those in non-journalism jobs were more likely to say the main reason was in order to earn a living (25 per cent) compared to three per cent of those in journalism jobs.

Only relatively few respondents to the overall survey were not in some form of employment at the time of the research. But, of these, the majority (58 per cent) intend to look for journalism-related work in the future.

4. Learning activities since starting employment

Forty-three per cent of those in work had undertaken some learning activities since starting employment. In the main, this covered professional skills and was paid for by the employer. The average length of learning activities, for those who had done some, was four days.

The learning activity was mainly considered necessary to tailor skills to their specific employer needs, raise skills to a higher level or address specific, employer-related skills issues. This is consistent with the 'normal' journalism-entry experience of starting a period of professionally-based training, such as the NCTJ's National Qualification in Journalism (NQJ). Only a minority (16 per cent) stated the training was necessary to fill gaps the diploma curriculum did not cover.

5. Views on the NCTJ experience

In the main, those who have completed the NCTJ diploma believe it prepares them well for what they choose to do next (79 per cent). Those who were more likely to say the diploma prepared them well for the world of work are not surprising:

- Those in work (85 per cent compared to 35 per cent of those not working).
- Those working in a journalism job (89 per cent compared to 65 per cent of those in a non-journalism job).

The higher the qualification level achieved by respondents, the more likely they are to say the diploma prepared them well for work: 100 per cent of those who achieved gold standard compared to 78 per cent of those with the diploma standard and 80 per cent of those yet to complete.

6. Reflections on current activities

NCTJ diploma graduates gave positive responses to questions about their current activities:

- Eighty-four per cent think their current activity is meaningful (compared to 85 per cent of all graduates).
- Eighty-four per cent think their current activity fits with their future plans (higher than the HESA all graduate level of 78 per cent).
- Seventy-five per cent believe they are using what they learnt in their studies (again higher than the HESA all-graduate level of 69 per cent).

Those NCTJ diploma graduates who are working in a journalism job are (i) more likely to believe their work is meaningful (90 per cent compared to 70 per cent in non-journalism jobs), (ii) more likely to believe their current work fits with their future plans (93 per cent compared to 58 per cent in non-journalism jobs) and (iii) more likely to believe they are using what they learnt in their studies (83 per cent compared to 51 per cent in non-journalism jobs).



1. Introduction

1.1 Background

It is important individuals considering investing their time and money in gaining the NCTJ Diploma in Journalism know what impact their investment will have. Particularly they should know whether holding the diploma is likely to lead to employment, whether it will increase their chances of getting the type of job they want and what salary level they may earn. To answer these information needs, the NCTJ has commissioned this research which examines the 'destinations' of people who have studied for the NCTJ Diploma in Journalism.

The report is based on a survey of individuals who have completed their course of study for the NCTJ diploma some 15 months previously. The survey covers all those who completed a course of study regardless of whether they obtained the NCTJ diploma or not. We have three 'attainment' levels: gold standard, diploma and incomplete (for those who have yet to complete the NCTJ diploma).

The research approach is based on that used by the UK's Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA) which conducts a regular 'graduate outcomes' survey of graduates from the UK's HE institutions. We use data from the HESA survey to benchmark the post-graduation activities of the NCTJ diploma graduates with national averages.

1.2 The NCTJ Diploma in Journalism

The NCTJ is the media industry's professional body and awarding organisation regulated by Ofqual, CCEA and Qualifications Wales to deliver industry-standard qualifications for pre-entry and trainee journalists as well as professional qualifications for working journalists.

The NCTJ Level 5 Diploma in Journalism is an industry-recognised, entry-level qualification and can be studied on an accredited course, via distance learning or on an apprenticeship.

There are 32 centres delivering NCTJ-accredited courses across the UK, where students work towards the Diploma in Journalism. Centres can be based in higher education, further education or private training providers.

To achieve the diploma, candidates must achieve a number of credits:

- Four mandatory subjects: (i) essential journalism, (ii) essential journalism e-portfolio, (iii) essential media law and regulation and (iv) essential journalism ethics and regulation¹.
- A minimum of three of the elective options, taken from: broadcast journalism (TV and radio), radio journalism, TV journalism, business and finance journalism, shorthand for journalists, video journalism for digital platforms, sports journalism, introduction to PR for journalists, practical magazine journalism, public affairs

¹ Broadcast regulation is mandatory only for those choosing to study broadcast journalism, radio journalism or TV journalism. The assessment may be taken instead of the newspaper and magazine regulation test to complete the essential journalism ethics and regulation module

for journalists, editing skills for journalists, PR and communications for journalists, media law court reporting, data journalism, journalism for a digital audience and photography for journalists. To pass, candidates must achieve grades A-E in all modules and a minimum 60 words per minute shorthand (if studied). A minimum of 82 credits is required to complete the qualification.

The NCTJ diploma can be awarded at two levels:

- The **gold standard**, which entails achieving grades A – C in all mandatory modules and 100 words per minute in the shorthand examination. Candidates may also gain a ‘gold standard’ diploma without shorthand as long as they earn a minimum 82 credits with A-C grades in their mandatory and elective modules.
- The **diploma standard**, which entails achieving grades A – E in all modules and 60 words per minute in the shorthand examination (if taken).

Individuals who do not achieve these levels have yet to reach the required standard and their diploma attainment is not yet complete. In these cases, re-examinations are necessary.

1.3 Research approach

The research is based on the approach used in HESA’s Graduate Outcomes study so we have benchmarked data. HESA’s survey covers UK higher education providers (HEPs) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Data is collected approximately 15 months after HE course completion. It first started with the 2017/18 academic year’s graduate population: the HESA data in this report is based on those who graduated in 2020/21.

The NCTJ sample was drawn from all those who completed their diploma studies between August and September 2021, a total of 1,221 individuals with valid email addresses. All of these received an email asking them to complete the survey via a provided link. We received 104 responses, a response rate of nine per cent.

We know from the NCTJ’s databases that, of the population within our scope, 17 per cent had attained the gold standard, 26 per cent the diploma and 57 per cent had not yet completed the diploma. As in previous surveys, we have a skewed response in terms of qualification level, in that 36 per cent of our respondents have attained the diploma at gold standard, 32 per cent at the diploma level and 33 per cent have yet to complete. Because of this, a weighting is applied to bring the qualification attainment level of the sample in line with the qualification attainment level of the population.

It should be noted both the NCTJ research and HESA’s Graduate Outcomes survey is conducted differently from previous surveys on graduates and produces different information. These new statistics are not comparable with the results of the earlier NCTJ destinations surveys nor with HESA’s Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey, so while we do not compare the statistics, we do make references where appropriate to the earlier findings.

Table 1.1: Weighting on diploma qualification level

	Unweighted sample		Weighted sample	
	n	%	n	%
Gold-standard	37	36	18	17
Diploma	33	32	27	26
Incomplete	34	33	59	57
Total	104	100	104	100



2. Current activities of NCTJ diploma graduates

2.1 Current employment status

Previous research² (albeit using a different methodology) into the destinations of NCTJ diploma graduates³ found employment rates were high and higher than the employment rate reported for all HE leavers. This research (using the new methodology) finds much the same, with just below nine out of ten (88 per cent) of the NCTJ diploma graduates working, three per cent studying, eight per cent unemployed and one per cent engaged in other activities. Compared with the overall graduate levels, this is a higher employment rate (88 per cent compared to 76 per cent), but also a higher unemployment rate (seven per cent compared to five per cent), with the balance being

the proportion engaged in further study (three per cent of NCTJ diploma graduates compared to 11 per cent of all graduates).

At least some of this differential is because of the nature of NCTJ study. Students are likely to leave it looking for work, while the HESA sample is all students, from both undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. Those graduating from postgraduate degree courses are more likely to be working than those from undergraduate degrees (82 per cent compared to 73 per cent), while those from undergraduate degrees are more likely to be engaged in further study (13 per cent compared to seven per cent). However, the employment rate of NCTJ graduates remains higher at 88 per cent compared to 82 per cent of postgraduate students..

Table 2.1: Current main activity

	NCTJ diploma graduates	All graduates		
		All	Postgraduates	Undergraduates
	%	%	%	%
Working	88	76	82	73
Studying	3	11	7	13
Unemployed	8	5	4	6
Other (including travel, caring for someone or retired)	1	7	6	8
Total	104	355,918	121,491	234,427

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey; HESA Graduate Outcomes Survey, 2020/21

² Destinations of NCTJ Diploma in Journalism Students, NCTJ, 2019

³ Throughout this report we describe those who have obtained the NCTJ diploma as 'diploma graduates' though we are aware that not all are graduates from a higher education institution

Some 3,550 out of the 355,918 graduates involved in the HESA research studied journalism. The employment rate for these journalists is higher than for all graduates (80 per cent compared to 76 per cent) but not as high as for NCTJ graduates (88 per cent). While it is important to

note the journalism graduates from the HESA database includes both NCTJ and non-NCTJ graduates, it suggests that (i) studying journalism results in a better employment rate but also (ii) studying for the diploma gives you an even better chance of securing work in the labour market.

Table 2.2: Current main activity

	NCTJ diploma graduates	All graduates	
		All	Journalism graduates
	%	%	%
Working	88	76	80
<i>Paid work for an employer</i>	79	70	70
<i>Running my own business</i>	6	2	2
<i>Self-employment/freelancing</i>	*	3	7
<i>Voluntary/unpaid work for an employer</i>	2	1	2
Studying	3	11	7
Unemployed	8	5	6
Other (including travel, caring for someone or retired)	1	7	7
Total	104	355,918	3,550

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey; HESA Graduate Outcomes Survey, 2020/21

There is a clear relationship between employment activity and level of NCTJ attainment, such that 94 per cent of those who attained the gold standard are working, compared to 89 per cent who attained the diploma and 85 per cent whose NCTJ is incomplete.

The majority of the unemployed are among the incomplete respondents – some 12 per cent of this group are unemployed, while none of those who attained the gold standard are.

Table 2.3: Current main activity and diploma attainment level

	All	NCTJ diploma graduates		
		Gold	Diploma	Incomplete
	%	%	%	%
Working	88	94	89	85
Studying	4	6	4	3
Unemployed	8	0	4	12
Other (including travel, caring for someone or retired)	1	0	4	0
Total	104	17	28	59

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey

2.2 Working as a journalist

Of those working, just below three quarters (74 per cent) were working in a journalism-related job and 26 per cent were not. Again, this varies by the qualification attainment: 88 per cent of those who attained the

gold standard are working in a journalism-related job, 79 per cent of those who attained the diploma, falling to 67 per cent of those who have yet to complete the diploma.

Table 2.4: Working in a journalism-related job

	All	Gold	Diploma	Incomplete
	%	%	%	%
Yes, working in a journalism-related job	74	88	79	67
No, not working in a journalism-related job	26	13	21	33
Total	90	16	24	48

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey

Base: all working

The Graduate Outcomes data tells us 285,226 graduates (post and undergraduate) were working 15 months after they graduated. As would be expected, only a small minority of these were working in journalism jobs – 328 were working as ‘editors’ and 1,025 were working as ‘journalists or reporters’. Some 3,137 were working elsewhere in ‘media professionals’ jobs (PR, advertising etc). The vast majority, 280,736, were not working in jobs in journalism or the media.

If we look at this in terms of the subject studied, of those who have studied journalism, 28 per cent were working in a journalism occupation and 13 per cent were working in other media professional roles. Fifty-nine per cent of journalism graduates are working in non-journalism related roles.

We can also look at this ‘the other way’: of those who were working in journalism 15 months after graduation (328 as ‘editors’ and 1,025 as ‘journalists or reporters’), the majority had not studied journalism. So, of the 328 who had found a job as an ‘editor’, only 36 (11 per cent) had studied journalism, with 292 (89 per cent) having studied a non-journalism subject. For ‘journalists and reporters’, 413 (40 per cent) had studied journalism, but the majority (612, 60 per cent) had not.

This data doesn’t take into account any further study that people may have done between their graduation and their finding work. So, someone who did, for example, a degree in history then did a fast-track NCTJ course would still be classified as someone who studied something else.

Table 2.5: Working as journalists: HESA data

Working as:	Total		Studied journalism		Studied other subject	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
(SOC 2491) Newspaper, periodical and broadcast editors	328	*	36	2	292	0
(SOC 2492) Newspaper and periodical broadcast journalists and reporters	1,025	*	413	26	612	0
Other (249) media professionals	3,137	1	205	13	2,932	1
Other non-media jobs	280,736	98	952	59	279,784	99
Total in work	285,226	100	1,605	100	283,621	100

Source: HESA Graduate Outcomes Survey, 2020/21

Note: base is all in employment

2.3 Role of the NCTJ diploma in obtaining jobs

Fifty-seven per cent of respondents to the NCTJ survey said they needed their NCTJ qualification to get the job they are doing, with 20 per cent saying it was a formal requirement and 37 per cent stating it was not a formal requirement. Forty-two per cent stated it was not required.

The requirement for the NCTJ diploma is lower than that reported by all graduates – here, 76 per cent state their qualification played a role in their getting their job, 52 per cent said it was a formal requirement (either because of the level or subject of qualification, or both) and 24 per cent said it was not a formal requirement but it did give an advantage. A quarter (24 per cent) stated it was not required. Of course, the ‘all graduate’ population covers some very vocational degrees where almost all

graduates in a subject go on to work in a related field (eg doctors, vets). In addition, the HESA question relates to qualification level as well as subject, so those stating that it was a formal requirement also covers those who have obtained a ‘graduate job’. When we examine the views of HESA journalism graduates, the proportion saying their qualification was a formal requirement falls from 52 per cent to 36 per cent.

The main variance of this is the nature of the job: whether it was a journalism-related job or not. Seventy-three per cent of those working in a journalism-related job from the NCTJ survey stated the NCTJ diploma was needed to get their job, with 25 per cent stating it was not required. For those in non-journalism jobs, only eight per cent said it was needed and 92 per cent that it was not.

Table 2.6: Whether the NCTJ qualification was required to get the job that they are doing

	NCTJ graduates			All graduates	Journalism graduates
	All	Journalism job	Non-journalism job		
	%	%	%	%	%
Yes, it was a formal requirement by my employer	20	27	0	52	36
Yes, whilst not a formal requirement it gave me an advantage	37	46	8	24	38
No, it was not required	42	25	92	24	24
Don't know	1	2	0	-	-
Total	82	62	21	228,794	1,209

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey; HESA Graduate Outcomes Survey, 2020/21

Base: all in employment

This also varies by qualification attainment level – as would be expected given the likelihood of getting a journalism job also varies by qualification attainment. Seventy-six per cent of those who achieved the diploma

at gold standard believe they needed the diploma to get their job, as did 68 per cent of those who attained the diploma without gold-standard compared to 44 per cent of those whose diploma is incomplete.

Table 2.7: Whether the NCTJ qualification was required to get the job they are doing

	All	Gold	Diploma	Incomplete
	%	%	%	%
Yes, it was a formal requirement by my employer	20	15	32	16
Yes, whilst not a formal requirement it gave me an advantage	37	61	36	28
No, it was not required	42	21	29	56
Don't know	1	3	4	0
Total	82	16	23	43

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey

Base: all in employment

The most important element of the NCTJ qualification to employers (as far as the respondents were aware) is the skills gained while they were studying for the qualification (56 per cent), followed by the fact they had studied journalism (18 per cent).

Table 2.8: Most important aspect of the NCTJ qualification to employers

	All	Journalism job	Non-journalism job
	%	%	%
The skills gained whilst studying for the qualification	56	60	41
The fact that you studied journalism	18	21	14
The level of study (e.g. undergraduate, postgraduate)	4	0	14
Work experience gained as part of the course	2	3	0
No one thing was most important	12	10	23
Don't know	7	6	9
Total	82	62	22

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey

Base: all in employment

2.4 Reasons for taking jobs

The NCTJ respondents who were in employment were asked why they had taken the job that they were doing. Responses were gathered for 'any' reason and then for the single 'main' reason.

Overall, the main reason (given by 54 per cent of respondents) was that the job they were doing fitted into their career plan or it was exactly the type of work they had wanted. Following this are reasons linked to onward career development, such as to gain and broaden experience (10 per cent) and an opportunity to

progress in the organisation (nine per cent). Then there were more 'practical' reasons – eight per cent stated it was the best job offer they received and eight per cent took the job in order to earn a living.

The responses vary by whether the individual has a journalism job or not. Those in journalism jobs are more likely to state the job fitted into their career plan or was exactly the sort of job they wanted compared to those in non-journalism jobs (62 per cent compared to 29 per cent). A quarter (25 per cent) of those in non-journalism jobs said they took their job in order to earn a living, compared to three per cent of those in a journalism job.

Table 2.9: Why they decided to take the current job/become self-employed

	All		Journalism job		Non-journalism job	
	All reasons	Main reason	All reasons	Main reason	All reasons	Main reason
	%	%	%	%	%	%
It fitted into my career plan/it was exactly the type of work I wanted	22	54	26	62	13	29
To gain and broaden my experience in order to get the type of job I really want	11	10	11	9	11	8
It was an opportunity to progress in the organisation	11	9	14	12	1	0
It was the best job offer I received	11	8	11	8	10	8
In order to earn a living	13	8	11	3	19	25
To see if I would like the type of work it involved	8	6	7	5	10	13
The job was well paid	11	3	9	2	17	8
It was in the right location	13	2	11	0	19	8
In order to pay off debts	1	0	0	0	3	0
To work in my family business	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	89	89	66	66	24	24

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey

Base: all in work

The responses from the NCTJ graduates for the 'main' reason for taking their job are broadly similar to that for all graduates. The most common main reason is that the job fitted into their career plan or was the type of job they wanted: 54 per cent of NCTJ graduates compared to 46 per cent of all graduates.



Table 2.10: Main reason to take the current job/become self-employed

	NCTJ graduates	All graduates
	%	%
It fitted into my career plan/it was exactly the type of work I wanted	54	46
To gain and broaden my experience in order to get the type of job I really want	10	14
It was an opportunity to progress in the organisation	9	10
It was the best job offer I received	8	7
In order to earn a living	8	10
To see if I would like the type of work it involved	6	5
The job was well paid	3	3
It was in the right location	2	3
In order to pay off debts	0	0
To work in my family business	0	1
Total	89	272,553

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey; HESA Graduate Outcomes Survey, 2020/21

Base: all in work

2.5 Nature of jobs

2.5.1 Those in journalism jobs

NCTJ graduates who were working in a journalism-related job were asked what that job was. Three quarters (77 per cent) were in reporter roles – 68 per cent were writers or reporters for newspapers or magazines and nine per cent broadcast roles. Eight per cent had progressed into editorial management. A further eight per cent were working in PR and communication roles.

Although sample sizes are small, it is notable that those who had attained the gold standard appear to have 'progressed' faster. Fourteen per cent were in editorial management roles compared to five per cent of those who had qualified at the diploma level and six per cent whose diploma is as yet incomplete.

Table 2.11: Job title of journalism-related jobs

	All	Gold	Diploma	Incomplete
	%	%	%	%
Editorial management	8	14	5	6
Writers and reporters (newspapers and magazines)	68	64	70	69
Broadcast reporter	9	7	10	9
Production (including photographers)	6	7	5	6
PR and communications	8	7	5	9
Other	2	0	5	0
Total	66	14	20	32

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey

Base: all in journalism-related job

The most common reason (33 per cent of those working as journalists) for wanting to be a journalist is because of the perceived importance of the role, including the importance of sharing people's stories and allowing people's voices to be heard. Twenty-seven per cent wanted to be a journalist because they were good at and/or enjoyed writing.

Those who attained the gold standard were more likely to say they wanted to become a journalist because of the importance of the role and less likely to say it was because they were good at writing and those who are yet to complete their diploma are the opposite: more likely to say they wanted to become a journalist because they were good at writing.

Table 2.12: Reasons for wanting to become a journalist

	All	Gold	Diploma	Incomplete
	%	%	%	%
Importance of role incl. sharing people's stories/making voices heard/making a better world	33	38	26	37
Good at/enjoy writing	27	13	26	32
Interest in subject matter e.g. sports	8	13	21	0
Nature of job/industry incl. variety/challenging/being creative	4	6	0	5
Interest in current affairs incl. world news	3	6	5	0
Other	15	19	5	18
Don't know	0	0	0	0
Not answered/no comment	11	6	16	8
Total	75	16	19	38

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey

Base: all in journalism-related job

Typical responses to the question about why the respondents want to be journalists perhaps illustrates their views. For those who focus on the positive social role of journalism:

“Share people’s stories and get underserved audiences’ voices heard.”

“To tell stories, dig deeper into what’s going on in the world, write, create.”

“I wanted to be a voice in the community.”

“I’m interested in people and society and inequality. I wanted to bring people’s stories to the public’s attention.”

“I want to give a voice to people who have no voice and to speak truth to power.”

For those who enjoy and consider themselves to be good at writing:

“I’m good at writing.”

“I enjoy writing and finding stories to report on.”

“I love to write and I was always interested in telling people’s stories.”

2.5.2 Those not working as journalists

NCTJ graduates not working as journalists were asked what they did in their jobs. We have coded these into 'journalism-adjacent jobs' (such as communications, marketing, public relations, etc) and 'non-journalism-adjacent', which are a much more varied range of job roles, including in teaching, bartending, finance, baking, children's entertainment, etc. The split between these is

shown below, with 55 per cent being in journalism-adjacent jobs and 45 per cent in jobs which are not journalism-related.

Non-journalism related jobs include 'teaching English in Vietnam', 'university English teacher in China', 'baker', 'hospitality', 'administration' and 'customer service assistant'.

Table 2.13: Whether non-journalist jobs are journalism-related

	All
	%
Journalism related	55
Not journalism related	45
Total	22

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey

Base: all in a non-journalism job

The most common reason why the NCTJ graduate is not working as a journalist is because they decided to pursue other career options as journalism wasn't for them (36 per cent). Twenty-seven per cent were not offered jobs as journalists and 23 per cent were offered jobs as journalists but decided they did not pay enough.

Table 2.14: Why they decided not to work as a journalist

	All	Gold	Diploma	Incomplete
	%	%	%	%
I decided that journalism wasn't for me and wanted to pursue other career options	36	-	40	33
I wasn't offered a job as a journalist	27	-	40	20
The journalist jobs I was offered didn't pay enough	23	-	0	33
The journalist jobs I was offered didn't offer attractive career development	0	-	0	0
Other	14	-	20	13
Total	22	0	5	15

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey

Base: all in a non-journalism job

Despite not being in a journalism-related job, the respondents believe the journalistic skills they have developed are still of use: over three quarters (78 per cent) said they use their journalism skills in their jobs.

Table 2.15: Whether NCTJ graduates not working as journalists use journalism skills

	All
	%
Yes, use journalism skills	78
No, do not use journalism skills	22
Total	23

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey

Base: all in a non-journalism job

2.6 Sector of employment

Just over two thirds (67 per cent) of NCTJ diploma graduates were working in the 'creative media' sectors, with 33 per cent in newspapers (18 per cent in regional and local newspapers, 15 per cent in national newspapers), 10 per cent in magazines (equally split between business and consumer/leisure magazines), seven per cent in television, six per cent in radio and 11 per cent in PR or corporate communications. A third (33 per cent) were working across the rest of the economy, in sectors such as the health sector (mainly the NHS), education, hospitality and retail.

As would be expected, this varies by whether the job is a journalism job or a non-journalism job:

- **Of those in journalism jobs, 83 per cent are working in the creative media sectors, with 45 per cent in newspapers.**
- **Of those in non-journalism jobs, 81 per cent were working across the rest of the economy. All of the remainder (19 per cent) are working for public relations agencies or corporate communications companies.**

Table 2.16: Sector of employment

	All	Journalism job	Non-journalism job
	%	%	%
Newspapers	33	45	0
Regional or local newspaper	18	25	0
National newspaper	15	20	0
Magazines	10	12	0
Business magazines	5	6	0
Consumer/leisure magazines	5	6	0
Radio	6	8	0
Television	7	10	0
National TV	6	8	0
Cable/satellite TV	1	2	0
Public relations agency or corporate communications company	11	9	19
Rest of the economy	33	17	81
Total	87	65	21

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey

Base: all in work

This distribution suggests a greater concentration of NCTJ diploma graduates in newspaper publishing than would be expected when compared to the sectoral distribution of all-age journalists. The Labour Force Survey (LFS) tells us 15 per cent of all journalists are employed in publishing of newspapers – compared to the 33 per cent of NCTJ graduates above. This is consistent with the historic links between the NCTJ and employers in the newspaper sector and the preference of these employers for the skills that are embedded within the diploma. It also suggests the newspaper sector remains the ‘entry point’ for many diploma-qualified journalists, from which they move out into other sectors.

2.7 Location of employment

Eighty-eight per cent of diploma graduates are working in England. London is the most common area of work, accounting for 31 per cent of respondents. This is a higher proportion than for all graduates (of which 22 per cent are based in London), but does reflect the pattern of journalism employment overall, which is London-centric (the LFS shows 53 per cent of all journalists are based in London⁴).

Table 2.17: Location of employment

	NCTJ diploma graduates	All graduates	All journalists
	%	%	%
England	88	76	92
North East	9	3	*
North West	9	9	7
Yorkshire and The Humber	3	6	3
East Midlands	13	5	1
West Midlands	4	7	3
East of England	2	6	8
London	31	22	53
South East	6	10	9
South West	11	7	7
Wales	2	4	1
Scotland	1	8	6
Northern Ireland	1	3	1
Other	7	9	*
Total	90	272,239	104,038

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey; HESA Graduate Outcomes Survey, 2020/21; Labour Force Survey, 2021

Base: all in work

⁴ With the increase in home working, this question is getting a little more complicated as some people may have an employer in one region (often London) but actually work in another. While this may not be the case for those working in regional and local newspapers, as journalists there may need to be where they work, the impact of home working on location of work needs further exploration.

2.8 Characteristics of employment

We can take a closer look at the nature of the jobs of the NCTJ respondents:

- **Ninety-one per cent of those in work were working full-time, nine per cent part-time. Those working in journalists' jobs are more likely to be working full-time (92 per cent compared to 87 per cent of those working in non-journalists' jobs).**
- **The majority (79 per cent) are employed on permanent (or open-ended) contracts. Eleven per cent are on fixed-term contracts lasting 12 months or longer.**

- **Less than one in ten (nine per cent) have any formal supervisory responsibilities. This is not unexpected: this research is done at a relatively early stage of their journalism career and many journalists (particularly early-career journalists) are expected to work independently.**

There are relatively few differences between journalism and non-journalism jobs. Journalism jobs are slightly more likely to be full-time than non-journalism jobs. Those in non-journalism jobs are more likely to formally supervise others (17 per cent, compared to six per cent of journalism jobs).

Table 2.18: Employment characteristics

	All	Journalism job	Non-journalism job
	%	%	%
Hours of work			
Full-time	91	92	87
Part-time	9	8	13
Nature of contract			
On a permanent or open-ended contract	79	80	80
On a fixed-term contract lasting 12 months or longer	11	13	0
On a fixed-term contract lasting less than 12 months	7	5	15
Other	1	2	0
Not known/not answered	1	0	5
Formal supervisory responsibilities			
Yes	9	6	17
No	91	94	83
Total	89	66	23

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey

Base: all in work

2.9 Salary

In both the NCTJ and HESA research, all those in work were asked what their annual pay was for their main job to the nearest thousand (£) before tax. The distribution is shown below, with the data from the HESA Graduate Outcomes survey shown as a comparator.

The median value of the NCTJ diploma graduates is in the range of £24,999 – £29,999, equivalent to that of the overall graduates (25,0001 – £30,000). The NCTJ diploma graduates' distribution has nearly a tenth (nine per cent) earning less than £15,000, while only one per cent of all graduates earn at this level. Many of these very low earners in the NCTJ data are self-employed, with some very low earners in this group.

Table 2.19: Journalism salary levels

NCTJ diploma graduates		All graduates	
	%		%
Less than £15,000	9	Less than £15,000	1
£15,000 – £20,999	10	£15,001 – £20,000	10
£21,000 – £23,999	31	£20,001 – £25,000	26
£24,000 – £29,999	26	£25,001 – £30,000	28
£30,000 – £35,999	17	£30,001 – £35,000	14
£36,000 – £38,999	0	£35,001 – £40,000	7
£39,000 – £44,999	2	£40,001 – £45,000	4
£45,000 – £50,999	2	£45,001 – £50,000	3
£51,000+	2	£50,001+	7
Median value	£24,999 – £29,999	Median value	£25,001 – £30,000
Total	90		172,350

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey; HESA Graduate Outcomes Survey, 2020/21

Base: all in work

Although care needs to be taken with small sample sizes with sub-analysis on the NCTJ survey data, there are some indications we can take:

- **The higher the qualification level, the higher the average wage.**
- **Those in journalism jobs are being paid more than those in non-journalism jobs.**
- **NCTJ respondents who are working in broadcasting (TV and radio) or who have moved to work in the rest of the economy are being paid higher wages.**

Table 2.20: Variations in average wage

	Median salary level
	%
All diploma graduates	£24,999 – £29,999
Qualification attainment level	
Gold	£27,000 – £29,999
Diploma	£24,000 – £26,999
Incomplete	£21,000 – £23,999
Job type	
Journalism-related job	£24,000 – £26,999
Non-journalism-related job	£21,000 – £23,999
Sector	
Newspaper	£21,000 – £23,999
Magazines	£21,000 – £23,999
Broadcasting	£27,000 – £29,999
PR and communications	£21,000 – £23,999
Rest of the economy	£24,000 – £26,999

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey

Base: all in work



2.10 Entering work

The most common ways NCTJ graduates found out about a job was via the employer's website (28 per cent of respondents) and a recruitment agency or recruitment agency website (also 28 per cent), followed by social media and professional networking sites (19 per cent). Fourteen per cent relied on more informal

methods, such as personal contacts, and 11 per cent had already worked at the company. Universities and colleges have played a role in just under a fifth of cases, with 11 per cent stating they found their job via the university or college careers service and eight per cent saying it was another university/college source.

Table 2.21: How they found out about their job

	All	Journalism job	Non-journalism job
	%	%	%
Employer's website	28	27	31
Recruitment agency/website	28	25	36
Social media/professional networking sites	19	23	6
Personal contacts, including family and friends	14	11	25
Already worked there (including on an internship/placement)	11	12	8
The university/college careers service	8	11	0
Other university/college source	1	1	0
Media (newspaper/magazine advertisement)	1	1	0
Speculative application	1	2	0
Other	15	13	23
Total	86	62	21

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey

Base: all in employment

Just less than a fifth (19 per cent) of NCTJ respondents had worked for their current employer before or during their NCTJ course (usually during). Eighty-one per cent had not done so.

Just less than a third (32 per cent) of respondents had done an internship (not with their current employer)

before starting work. Sixty-eight per cent had not done so. Thirty-nine per cent of respondents were paid for their internships and just less than half (48 per cent) received no pay or expenses. Thirteen per cent received expenses, but were not paid.

Table 2.23: Details of internships

Length of internship	
1-2 weeks	27
3-4 weeks	30
2-3 months	25
4-6 months	5
6 months to a year	14
Payment	
Paid	39
Unpaid, but with expenses reimbursed	13
Unpaid, no expenses paid	48
Total	28

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey

Base: all who had worked in an internship before their current job

2.11 Activities and intentions of those not working

As we have seen, we have a minority of respondents who are not working and are either studying, unemployed or doing something else (including travel, caring for someone or retired). The sample sizes of these sub-groups do not allow a sensible analysis of these groups separately, so where the questions allow, we have combined the data into a single 'non-working' group:

- **All are either currently seeking work or intend to start seeking work in the near future.**
- **The majority (58 per cent) will be seeking a journalism-related job.**
- **Of those that will not be seeking a job in journalism, the main reason is that their experiences on their NCTJ diploma course have made them realise journalism is not a career they wish to pursue further.**





3. Learning activities

3.1 Whether respondents have undertaken learning activities

While all the NCTJ-graduate respondents have completed a course of study relatively recently, we should not expect this will be the end of their 'learning' and, at some point, further learning will take place. Indeed, 43 per cent of respondents in work had taken part in a learning activity since starting their work and 57 per cent had not done so.

Those working in journalism jobs were more likely to have received training than those in non-journalism jobs (46 per cent compared to 32 per cent). This most likely relates to journalists starting work and beginning a structured professional training scheme for new journalists.

Table 3.1: Whether they took part in any learning activities related to their work since starting employment

	All	Journalism job	Non-journalism job
	%	%	%
Yes	43	46	32
No	57	54	68
Total	89	67	22

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey
 Base: all in work

These learning activities cover a range of activities, including social media (51 per cent), writing and research (48 per cent), law and ethics (45 per cent), production, design and photography skills (45 per cent),

software (33 per cent), health and safety (19 per cent) and business and management skills (11 per cent). Just over a quarter (26 per cent) received training in some other area.

Table 3.2: Learning activities undertaken since starting employment

	All
	%
Social media	51
Writing/research	48
Law and ethics	45
Production, design and photography	45
Software	33
Health and safety	19
Business and management	11
Other	26
Total	38

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey

Base: all in work and having taken part in any learning activities related to work

Employers paid for the learning in 53 per cent of cases, with it being supplied with no costs involved in 41 per cent of cases.

Table 3.3: Who paid for the training

	All
	%
Your employer	53
Supplied free – no costs involved	41
You personally	3
Your family	2
Total	38

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey

Base: all in work and having taken part in any learning activities related to work

Thirty-seven per cent of respondents had very short lengths of training (one – three days), but at the other end of the scale, 41 per cent had received substantial inputs – 10 days or more.

Table 3.4: Estimated number of days spent on training

	All	All who gave a response
	%	%
1 – 3	28	37
4 – 6	11	19
7 – 9	1	4
10 or more	31	41
Can't recall	28	-
Total	38	27

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey

Base: all in work and having taken part in any learning activities related to work

The reasons why the training was considered to be necessary generally relate to a perceived need for ongoing skills development, either to tailor the skill to a specific employer need (38 per cent), to address specific skills issues which are relevant only to the employer

(25 per cent) or to raise skills to a higher level (17 per cent). A minority (16 per cent) believed the training was necessary to fill gaps that the NCTJ curriculum did not cover.

Table 3.5: Why training was considered necessary

	All
	%
Tailor your skills to the specific employer need	38
Address specific skills issues which are relevant only to the employer	25
Raise skills to a higher level	17
Fill gaps that the NCTJ curriculum did not cover	16
Other	4
Total	38

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey

Base: all in work and having taken part in any learning activities related to work



Those (relatively few) respondents who stated the training was needed to fill gaps the NCTJ curriculum did not cover were asked what those gaps were. These included film and TV skills:

“ I’ve been learning to shoot professionally, this isn’t taught on the curriculum. ”

“ I think the lack of broadcast/video journalism skills it teaches is really inadequate. Even in print, you’re expected to do Facebook lives/short videos for social media and my training during my NCTJ (one module making one video) was not fit for purpose. For broadcast, I had very few of the production skills needed for my job, and was lucky to secure it at all. ”

“ Photojournalism and video skills. ”

The gaps were also thought to include production and design skills:

“ Adobe products (mainly Premiere Pro). ”

“ Graphic design. ”

Some respondents noted the need for further writing skills:

“ Non-fiction feature writing. ”

“ Variances in news writing style. ”

Other people mentioned learning regarding advertising:

“ Specific industry training regarding TV, programmatic and radio advertising as my publication is B2B and specialises in this. ”

“ Advertising data analysis. ”

There were suggestions about other skills as well:

“ Chairing and moderating panels at events. ”



4. Views of the NCTJ experience

At its heart, the NCTJ diploma is a qualification, recognised by the industry, to help improve the work-readiness of graduates learning journalism:

- Seventy-nine per cent of respondents believed the NCTJ diploma had prepared them well for the world of work, with 23 per cent stating it had done so very well and 56 per cent saying it had done so well.
- Thirteen per cent said it had not prepared them well for the world of work.

Table 4.1: How well the NCTJ diploma prepared NCTJ graduates for the world of work

	All
	%
Very well	23
Well	56
Neither well nor not well	7
Not very well	9
Not at all	4
Total (n)	94

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey
Base: all respondents, except for those who could not give a response

The views of how well the NCTJ diploma prepared the individual for the world of work varies:

- The higher the qualification attainment level, the more likely it is the respondent believes the diploma prepared them well for the world of work. Ninety-four per cent of those who qualified at gold standard believe it prepared them well for the world of work, compared to 80 per cent of those who have yet to complete their diploma.
- The proportion who believe they were well prepared for work varies from 90 per cent for those who studied with private providers and 86 per cent for those who studied on a postgraduate course

at HE, down to 71 per cent at university undergraduate courses and 63 per cent for those who studied their diploma at an FE college.

- Perhaps not surprisingly, those who are working are more likely to believe the diploma has prepared them well for the world of work (85 per cent) than those who are not working (32 per cent).
- Also, perhaps not surprisingly, those working in a journalism job are more likely to believe the NCTJ diploma has prepared them well for the world of work (89 per cent) than those working in a non-journalism job (65 per cent).

Table 4.2: How well the NCTJ qualification prepared individuals for the world of work

	Well	Neither well/ not well	Not well	Sample size
	%	%	%	%
All	79	7	13	104
Diploma qualification level				
Gold	94	6	0	17
Diploma	78	15	7	27
Incomplete	80	4	16	59
Nature of centre				
College/FE	63	18	18	12
University/HE undergraduate	71	11	18	32
University/HE postgraduate	86	3	11	39
Private provider	90	5	5	19
Employment status				
Working	85	6	4	89
Non-working	32	18	50	16
Whether in journalism job				
Journalism job	89	5	6	66
Non-journalism job	65	15	20	23

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey

Base: all respondents, except for those who could not give a response

Those who said the NCTJ diploma equipped them **well** for the world of work were asked why this was the case. Mainly this related to issues around skills development:

“ I sharpened my editorial judgement, learned to better tailor my writing to the situation, got better at writing under time pressure and got a good grounding in the ethical and legal considerations that must go into responsible modern journalism. ”

“ I felt like all the skills I gained and everything I'd learnt really gave me an advantage. ”

“ Although I decided not to continue in journalism, the skills I learnt have helped me attain a role in communications and allowed me to perform the requirements of this role. ”

There was also specific mention of media law skills:

“ Basic journalism skills achieved allowing me to do my job in a legally sound way. ”

Some respondents noted the role of the diploma in preparing individuals for the nature of work in journalism:

“ Was quite intense which helped prepare me for the pace of working in the industry. ”

“ After the qualification I felt prepared for the workplace and thought I had all the necessary skills to succeed. ”

The reasons why (the minority of) respondents said the diploma did **not prepare them well** for the world of work suggested it was because it was not in touch with industry needs, particularly in the area of digital skills and journalism. This is sometimes seen in the context of time spent learning alternative content, particularly shorthand:

“ I spent hours perfecting my shorthand and did achieve my 100wpm, but that time would have been so much better spent on digital and broadcast skills. ”

“ Have had zero need for shorthand so far. ”

There was some mention of not preparing people for the realities of working as a journalist:

“ Didn't prepare me for the current shortage of resources and shortage of time to achieve anything of good quality in the local press. ”

“ It prepared me to be a journalist in an ideal world. What most journalists do nowadays is not really journalism. ”

“ No practical skills. ”

There is some mention of the learning being of 'poor quality', but this would seem to be about delivery by the education and training provider, not about the structure and design of the diploma itself.

“ Terrible course, awful tutors. Disorganised, poor communication. A shambles. ”

“ The course has since lost its accreditation. ”



5. Reflections on current activities and general wellbeing

5.1 Reflections on current activities

Graduates were asked three questions to summarise their feelings about their activities at the time of the survey:

- Eighty-four per cent of NCTJ diploma graduates agree their current activity is meaningful (with 33 per cent strongly agreeing and 51 per cent agreeing). This is at a similar level as that reported by all graduates in the HESA research (85 per cent).
- Eighty-four per cent agree their current activity fits with their future plans (41 per cent strongly agreeing and 43 per cent agreeing). This is higher than reported by all graduates in the HESA research (78 per cent).
- Seventy-five per cent agree they are utilising what they learnt in their studies (36 per cent strongly agreeing and 39 per cent agreeing), which again is higher than the comparable figure in the HESA research (69 per cent).

Table 5.1: Reflections on current activities

	NCTJ diploma graduates	All graduates
	%	%
My current activity is meaningful		
Strongly agree	33	41
Agree	51	44
Neither agree nor disagree	10	7
Disagree	4	5
Strongly disagree	2	3
My current activity fits with my future plans		
Strongly agree	41	38
Agree	43	40
Neither agree nor disagree	9	9
Disagree	2	8
Strongly disagree	5	5
I am utilising what I learnt during my studies in my current activity		
Strongly agree	36	28
Agree	39	41
Neither agree nor disagree	10	12
Disagree	9	12
Strongly disagree	6	7
Total	92	241,631

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey; HESA Graduate Outcomes Survey, 2020/21

Base: all in work

The main variation in these relates to whether the respondents are working in a journalism job or not:

- Those working as journalists are more likely to believe their work is meaningful (90 per cent compared to 70 per cent of those in non-journalism jobs).

- Those working as journalists are more likely to believe their work fits with their future plans (93 per cent compared to 58 per cent).
- Those working as journalists are more likely to believe they were utilising what they had learnt during their studies (83 per cent compared to 51 per cent in non-journalism related jobs).

Table 5.2: Reflections on current activities

	NCTJ diploma graduates	Journalism job	Non-journalism job
	%	%	%
My current activity is meaningful			
Strongly agree	33	35	30
Agree	51	55	40
Neither agree nor disagree	10	8	17
Disagree	4	3	6
Strongly disagree	2	0	8
My current activity fits with my future plans			
Strongly agree	41	47	24
Agree	43	46	34
Neither agree nor disagree	9	5	19
Disagree	2	2	2
Strongly disagree	5	0	21
I am utilising what I learnt during my studies in my current activity			
Strongly agree	36	41	19
Agree	39	42	32
Neither agree nor disagree	10	11	8
Disagree	9	3	27
Strongly disagree	6	3	15
Total	92	66	23

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey

Base: all in work

5.2 General wellbeing

As well as asking about reflections on their current activities, respondents were asked a series of questions about their general wellbeing and happiness. Again, these were designed to mirror equivalent questions in HESA's Graduate Outcomes study, but HESA decided not to release this data so we cannot show comparators. Looking at the data for NCTJ diploma graduates:

- **The majority of respondents felt satisfied with their life, with 54 per cent rating this as eight or higher, leading to a mean score of 7.28.**

- **The majority of respondents felt the things they are doing in their life are worthwhile, with 48 per cent rating this as eight or above, leading to a mean score of 7.41.**
- **The majority of respondents feel happy, with 47 per cent rating this as eight or above, leading to a mean score of 7.06.**
- **Less than a fifth of respondents feel anxious, with 19 per cent rating this as eight or above, leading to a mean score of 4.85. Note this scale is the 'opposite' to the above where a low score is more positive an outcome.**

Table 5.3: General wellbeing

	Satisfaction with your life	Things done in your life are worthwhile	How happy you felt yesterday	How anxious
	%	%	%	%
0 – Extremely dissatisfied/unworthwhile/unhappy/anxious	0	0	0	8
1	1	0	0	7
2	3	1	2	14
3	1	0	3	3
4	5	3	7	9
5	7	9	6	12
6	8	8	14	12
7	22	31	20	16
8	29	27	26	11
9	16	9	12	8
10 – Extremely satisfied/worthwhile/happy/unanxious	9	12	9	0
Mean	7.28	7.41	7.06	4.85
Total	104	104	104	104

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey

Base: all respondents

Table 5.4 shows how the ratings vary with the nature of employment:

- Those in journalism jobs are more satisfied with life than those in non-journalism jobs (average score of 7.54 compared to 6.66).
- Respondents in journalism jobs are more likely to feel the things they do are worthwhile (average score of 7.49 compared to 6.80).

- Those in journalism jobs are happier than those in non-journalism jobs (with an average score of 7.05 compared to 6.86).
- Those in journalism jobs feel more anxious than those in non-journalism jobs (average score of 5.65 compared to 3.68).

Table 5.4: Mean scores on wellbeing

	All	Journalism job	Non-journalism job
	n	n	n
Satisfaction with life	7.28	7.54	6.66
Feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile	7.41	7.49	6.80
How happy do you feel	7.06	7.05	6.86
How anxious do you feel	4.85	5.65	3.68
Total	104	66	23

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey

Base: all respondents



6. Summary and discussion

This research has explored the post-NCTJ diploma activities of those who took an NCTJ-accredited course 15 months previously:

- **Employment levels are high (88 per cent) and higher than for the all-graduate comparator (which stands at 76 per cent).**
- **Relevant employment is high in that 74 per cent were working in a journalism-related job. This is at a much higher level than the equivalent figure for journalism graduates from within the HESA 'all-graduate' data for all students leaving HE (28 per cent).**

Of course, this may underestimate the value of the NCTJ: some of those who are working in non-journalism jobs are doing so out of choice, not because they have failed to get a job in journalism. And among those who are working in non-journalism jobs, 78 per cent are using their journalism skills in that job.

The relationship between the attainment of a higher level of diploma (the gold standard) and employment success is complicated. The attributes which lead to higher levels of NCTJ qualification (intelligence, hard work, diligence, etc) are also those attributes which employers value and will therefore lead to greater chances of employment. But qualifications undoubtedly

play an important role signposting to employers that an individual has these desirable attributes, along with the industry-relevant skills taught on the diploma. So it is not surprising there is a relationship between higher levels of qualification attainment and (i) the likelihood of being employed and (ii) the likelihood of working in a journalism-related job:

- **Ninety-four per cent of those who have qualified at gold standard are working, compared to 89 per cent of those with the diploma and 85 per cent of those who have yet to complete their diploma.**
- **Eighty-eight per cent of those with the gold standard (who are working) are working in a journalism-related job, compared to 79 per cent of those with the diploma and 67 per cent of those who have yet to complete the diploma.**

The role of the NCTJ diploma is acknowledged by NCTJ diploma graduates, with 57 per cent stating it played a role in getting them their job. Twenty per cent said it was a formal requirement and 37 per cent said, while not a formal requirement, it had been an advantage. These proportions are, as you would expect, higher among those working in journalism jobs – with 73 per cent stating it had played a role (27 per cent stating that it was a formal requirement and 46 per cent that it had bestowed an advantage).

Again, the nature of the research design may lead to undervaluing the role of the NCTJ diploma in that the diploma may have helped some gain their first job and it is because of their first job they are holding their current job: the diploma being an important first link in the chain. There is a debate about the length of time after getting a qualification that success in employment can be attributed to that qualification. Qualifications become less of a feature in recruitment decisions than experiences and skills which have been developed in work – and the 15 month follow-up period may have given some of the respondents time to move on from their first jobs.

In this context, it is worth noting that a clear majority (72 per cent) think the NCTJ diploma has prepared the individual well for the world of work. Among the minority who do not think the diploma prepared them well for working, the higher proportions are among those who are (i) not working or (ii) not working as a journalist. Where these respondents have concerns, we need to consider whether they are commenting on (i) the design and content of the diploma (for which the NCTJ has direct responsibility) or (ii) the quality of the delivery of the training, which is the direct responsibility of the training provider and where the NCTJ has a more indirect, distanced responsibility.

The role of the NCTJ diploma in getting people into work and (particularly) into journalism jobs is important because the NCTJ destinations survey data shows those in journalism jobs were (compared to those in non-journalism jobs) more likely to believe their work is meaningful, more likely to believe their work fits with their future plans and more likely to believe they were using what they learnt in their studies. And following on from this, those in journalism jobs were more likely than those in non-journalism jobs to feel satisfied with their life, feel the things they are doing are worthwhile and feel happy. This is, intuitively, reasonable: if an individual chose to study and train as a journalist then those who have successfully followed a career as a journalist are likely to feel more positively about aspects of their work and life than those who have not.

There has been some debate about salary levels in journalism, focussing on whether they are too low. Our data shows the average salaries of the respondents to the destinations survey are at the same level of average salaries of all graduates in the HESA research. The NCTJ diploma graduates do have a higher proportion earning at very low salary levels, with just less than a tenth of diploma graduates earning less than £15,000 compared to one per cent of all HESA graduates. These people tend to be self-employed.





Annexes

Annex 1. Sample characteristics

A1: NCTJ diploma qualification level

We know from the NCTJ databases that of the population within our scope, 17 per cent had attained the gold standard, 26 per cent the diploma and 57 per cent not yet completing the diploma. As in previous surveys, we have a skewed response in terms of qualification level, in that 36 per cent of

our respondents have attained the diploma at gold standard, 32 per cent at the diploma level and 33 per cent have yet to complete. Because of this, a weighting is applied to bring the qualification attainment level of the sample into line with the qualification attainment level of the population.

Table A1: Diploma qualification level

	Unweighted sample		Weighted sample	
	n	%	n	%
Gold	37	36	18	17
Diploma	33	32	27	26
Incomplete	34	33	59	57
Total	104	100	104	100

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey

Base: all respondents

As with previous destinations surveys, there is not a complete match between the qualification level the NCTJ's database holds and the qualification level the respondent stated they had. Twenty-five per cent of the respondents stated they had a gold-standard qualification, 37 per cent have qualified at the diploma level and 25 per cent stated they had yet to complete. Thirteen per cent did not know. This is clearly a discrepancy from the distribution on the database which has the ratio 17: 26: 57.

There is little discrepancy among those who (from the NCTJ's database) we know to hold the gold standard. Ninety-seven per cent of those who have the gold standard also responded they had the gold standard. Three per cent of these 'downgraded' their qualification level stating they had passed at the diploma level.

12 per cent of those who (from the NCTJ's database) have attained the qualification level at diploma level responded they have achieved gold standard. Eighty-two per cent 'agree' they have attained at the diploma level, with six per cent not knowing.

It is among the incompletes where there is most discrepancy. Forty-four per cent of these respondents state they have yet to complete the diploma, but 26 per cent state they have attained it at the diploma level and nine per cent claim to have passed at gold standard. Twenty-one per cent said they did not know.

It is worth emphasising that throughout the analysis, whenever we present data on the basis of qualification attainment, we base this on the data taken from the NCTJ's database.

Table A2: Correlation between respondents' diploma qualification levels from database and survey

	All	Qualification from NCTJ database		
		Gold	Diploma	Incomplete
	%	%	%	%
Qualification level given in survey				
Gold standard	25	97	12	9
Diploma	37	3	82	26
Incomplete	25	0	0	44
Don't know	13	0	6	21
Total (n)	104	18	27	59

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey; NCTJ database
Base: all respondents

A2: Nature of education provider

Seventy-one per cent of the respondents studied their diploma at a university or higher education institution (HEI), with 39 per cent studying the diploma at a postgraduate level and 32 per cent at undergraduate level. Fourteen per cent studied at a college or FE institution and 10 per cent at a private provider.

In broad terms, this reflects the nature of the sample, where 75 per cent studied for their diploma at a HEI, seven per cent at a college of FE and 18 per cent at a private provider.

Table A3: Nature of education provider

	Survey respondents	Sample from NCTJ database
	%	%
University or HE institution providing a postgraduate degree	39	75
University or HE institution providing an undergraduate degree	32	
College or FE institution	14	7
Private training provider	10	18
Don't know	5	0
Base	104	1,231

Source: NCTJ 2023 destinations survey; NCTJ database

Base: all respondents

A3: Personal characteristics

There appears to be an over-representation of female respondents, with nearly two-thirds (65 per cent) of respondents to the survey being female and 29 per cent male. While there is a higher proportion of females studying journalism than men (HESA data suggests it is 53 per cent compared to 47 per cent), we have a higher female response level than would be expected.

As would be expected, the ages of the respondents tend towards the younger end of the age spectrum:

- Thirteen per cent are aged 20 – 22
- Forty-three per cent are aged 23 – 24
- Twenty-one per cent are aged 25 – 26
- Only 14 per cent are aged over 30

Thirteen per cent of the respondents had disabilities or health problems, broadly in line with the level for the overall journalism population.

Eighty-three per cent of respondents are from white ethnic groups and 16 per cent from other ethnic groups.

Table A4: Personal characteristics

	%
Sex	
Male	29
Female	65
Other	4
Prefer not to say	2
Age	
20-22	13
23-24	43
25-26	21
27-30	6
31+	14
Prefer not to say	3
Health problems or disabilities	
Yes	13
No	78
Prefer not to say	9
Qualification level	
5 – Postgraduate	56
4 – Undergraduate	37
Below level 4	7
Ethnicity	
White	83
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	3
Asian/Asian British	4
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	3
Other ethnic group	6
Prefer not to say	2
Base	104

Annex 2:

Broad job titles and examples of detailed job titles

General management	Publisher	Publishing director
Editorial management	Assistant editor Chief sub-editor Content editor Deputy editor Digital editor Editorial director Editor Head of editorial	Legal editor Managing editor News editor Online editor Picture editor Sports editor Sub-editor Web editor
Section heads	Chief reporter Chief sports writer	Director of photography Head of news
Writers and reporters (newspapers and magazines)	Crime reporter Features writer Junior reporter Reporter	Political reporter Senior reporter Sports reporter Staff reporter
Broadcast reporter	Broadcast journalist Broadcaster	Video journalist
Production (including photographers)	Assistant producer Broadcast assistant Photographer Press photographer Producer	Radio producer Senior photographer Television producer Video producer
PR and communications	Account manager Communications officer Media consultant	Media manager PR consultant Senior media manager
Training	Editorial trainer Head of training	Training provider

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