

## **NCTJ distance learning – Frequently Asked Questions**

**Are you interested in studying the industry’s recognised entry-level qualification, the NCTJ Diploma in Journalism, via distance learning? If you have any questions regarding distance learning, please see below for a comprehensive list of questions we receive regularly.**

### **NCTJ Level 5 Diploma in Journalism**

#### *What are the entry requirements?*

There are no entry requirements for the distance learning course, however when applying for jobs reporters are usually required to have a minimum of five GCSE passes or equivalent - one of these must be in English.

We recommend that you complete a [self-test](#) before purchasing the course materials. The self-test marking guide can also be found [here](#).

#### *How many credits do I need to complete the diploma qualification?*

You must complete the four mandatory skills modules plus a selection of elective skills modules to reach a minimum of 82 credits overall.

The mandatory skills modules are worth a combined total of 47 credits. A further 35 credits minimum are required from the available elective skills modules.

The credits are shown in this handy chart [here](#).

#### *What is the pass grade for each module?*

To pass a module, learners must achieve a grade of A-E (if taking shorthand, a minimum speed of 60 words per minute is required). Learners should aim to achieve an A-C grade in each module to reach the industry gold standard which is recognised by journalist employers.

#### *How much is the total cost?*

You can purchase the mandatory module package for £535.50. This is a discounted rate for purchasing the package. You may also purchase the mandatory modules separately. The elective modules range from £108 to £170.10. There is a further overall cost of £561.60 for sitting the exams and assessments (this is for one sitting). You pay for each exam/assessment individually when you are ready to sit. More information [click here](#).

#### *Do I have to pay for the distance learning modules in one purchase?*

No, you can purchase the modules in one bulk order or one at a time. We would recommend that you purchase the mandatory modules package first and work through those before purchasing the elective options. The mandatory modules will equip you with the essential

knowledge and skills you need to operate effectively as a trainee journalist and the elective options build on those skills in specific subject areas.

*Do I have to study the modules in order?*

Not necessarily but it is strongly recommended that you complete the core modules first as they form the backbone of learning.

*Are textbooks included in the course cost?*

Textbooks are included in the price of the modules.

*How does it work for international shipping?*

Shipping overseas costs extra. Price depends on where we are shipping to.

*Do I need to arrange work experience?*

If you are not already working in the journalism industry, you should arrange your own work experience so that you can write stories for the portfolio element of the course. It is also important to get industry experience so that you can put what you are learning into practice. Work experience is just as important as the theory side of journalism otherwise you are going to go out looking for a job at a disadvantage compared to other applicants.

*How long does it take to complete the diploma course?*

It depends on individual learning speeds and your available time to study and dedication.

Typically, learners can achieve the qualification within 12-18 months.

We strongly recommend that you aim to complete the Diploma in Journalism within 24 months.

The structure, requirements and availability of modules can change because the NCTJ reviews and updates all its diploma materials to reflect the needs of the industry.

The NCTJ will communicate any significant changes to the qualification to learners in advance and annual updates to individual modules are communicated each year in September.

The estimated number of learning hours per module required by a typical learner to gain the qualification (please note, this is for guidance purposes and not a requirement) are below:

| <b>Mandatory skills modules</b>            | <b>Learning hours</b> |
|--|-----------------------|
| Essential journalism                       | 220 hours             |
| Essential journalism e-portfolio           | 120 hours             |
| Essential journalism ethics and regulation | 30 hours              |
| Essential media law and regulation         | 100 hours             |
|  |                       |
| <b>Elective skills modules</b>             | <b>Learning hours</b> |
| Business and finance journalism            | 70 hours              |

|                                       |                       |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Editing skills for journalists        | 70 hours              |
| Journalism for a digital audience     | 70 hours              |
| Media law court reporting             | 70 hours              |
| Practical magazine journalism         | 140 hours             |
| PR and communications for journalists | 140 hours             |
| Public affairs for journalists        | 70 hours              |
| Radio journalism                      | 70 hours              |
| Shorthand for journalists             | 140 hours (to 100wpm) |
| Sports journalism                     | 70 hours              |
| TV journalism                         | 70 hours              |
| Videojournalism for digital platforms | 70 hours              |

### *What is gold standard and how do I achieve it?*

Learners who achieve grades of A-C in each module completed (if taking shorthand, a minimum speed of 100 words per minute is required) will be awarded the industry 'Gold Standard' Diploma in Journalism.

To set yourself apart and increase your employability, all learners should strive to reach industry 'Gold Standard' level.

### *How do I access tutor support?*

Each Diploma in Journalism distance learning unit you have purchased includes **1 hour** of tutor support time.

Tutor support is flexible and you can choose how to use your support time.

A tutor can help with content queries, review your work or mark a mock exam for you.

**Additional** tutor support time may also be purchased if required.

To book, visit <https://www.nctj.com/tutor-support/>

### *Do I have to take exams on certain dates?*

Yes – national exams are open to all diploma candidates and are scheduled throughout the year and can be accessed here <https://www.nctj.com/qualifications-courses/assessments-results/national-exams/>

### *What if I've booked an exam and then don't feel ready to sit the exam?*

You will need a good reason to cancel the exam and receive a refund e.g., for medical reasons. Evidence will need to be provided for the NCTJ to offer a refund. As per our website, In the event of a cancellation or non-attendance, exams are non-refundable. Deferrals will only be considered in exceptional circumstances, in line with the NCTJ reasonable adjustments and special considerations policy.

**If you have further queries, email [skillsacademy@nctj.com](mailto:skillsacademy@nctj.com).**