

DO YOU WANT TO BE A JOURNALIST?

YOUR GUIDE TO GETTING INTO ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING CAREERS AROUND.

GOALS
ON SUNDAY

WHAT'S INSIDE:

- 9 Golden rules of journalism
- 14-15 Investigative reporting
- 20-21 Advice on podcasting
- 22-23 Diversity in journalism

PAGE 12-13

Sky Sports News presenter Emma Paton talks training, challenges and authenticity

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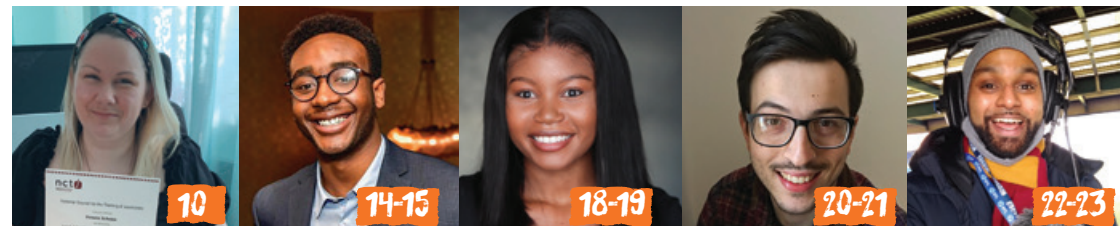
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Head to
PAGE 22
to find out more
about the JDF

CONTENTS

- 5 Introduction** Abbie Scott, deputy managing editor of the *Financial Times*
- 7 First steps** Here are some steps you can take now to get started in journalism
- 9 Golden rules** We lay out our golden rules for how to be a good journalist
- 10 The Certificate in Foundation Journalism** Find out how the NCTJ's introductory qualification could be the right first step
- 12-13 Sports journalism** Sky Sports News presenter Emma Paton talks training, challenges and authenticity
- 14-15 Investigative reporting** Kafui Okpattah tells us about his explosive scoop on the Tate Modern attacker
- 17 Starting out in journalism** FT breaking news reporter George Steer explains what he learned during the first year of his career in journalism
- 18-19 A royal scoop** Former apprentice Abbianca Makoni shares her experience of interviewing the Duke and Duchess of Sussex
- 20-21 Podcasting** Podcast host Jacob Granger on putting yourself out there and getting behind the microphone
- 22-23 Diversity in journalism** Find out how a bursary from the Journalism Diversity Fund could kick-start your career
- 24-27 Choose the right route for you** NCTJ alumni talk about the different paths they took into successful careers
- 28-30 Find a journalism course** A directory of all NCTJ-accredited courses in the UK



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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the NCTJ careers guide 2021

At a time when one story has continued to dominate the news (and our lives) it is important not to lose sight of the facts, and to focus on serving our readers and the communities they belong to. We need news organisations to produce stories that give context and help us understand the difference between truth and lies.

Finding the tone and voice for the story is an essential part of being a journalist and editor. In order to do this, newsrooms require journalists from a range of backgrounds and experiences to enable them to produce stories that connect with our audience. This is not only true of news, foreign affairs and politics, but also art, sport and entertainment.

In this guide you'll find advice on starting out in journalism and the different roles available. You will also be able to choose the best NCTJ course to suit your journalism and the stories you want to tell.

The *Financial Times* and the National Council for the Training of Journalists want students from all backgrounds regardless of ethnicity, religion and sexuality to receive gold-standard journalism training and feel welcome in our newsrooms. We further support this by sponsoring the Journalism Diversity Fund which is managed by the NCTJ and works to support a diverse range of students, enabling them to access the right courses and be fully prepared to start their journalism careers.



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Abbie Scott
Deputy managing editor,
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The School of Journalism

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FIRST STEPS TO START OUT IN JOURNALISM

This guide provides lots of information about the quality journalism training available from the NCTJ, as well as advice on careers. But what can you do right now to give you a head start?

Here are some tips on how to make your mark and learn more about the industry from the outset:

- 1. Create a Twitter account and follow other accounts that interest you.**
This will help you develop contacts and virtually meet people who share your interests. Who knows, they could be a great source for stories. You may also find it worthwhile to follow journalists who talk about topics that interest you too.
- 2. Start a blog on something that interests you.** Develop your writing skills and creativity by blogging about a subject that you're passionate about, whether it's a hobby, your local area or a cause that you want to highlight. Promoting your blog on social media can help you build up your brand.
- 3. Be a consumer of news.** If you want to be a journalist, knowing all about current affairs is so important. By watching, reading and listening to news on various platforms, you may also discover which area of journalism you're most interested in. Perhaps you're into sports journalism, environmental issues or music reviews? The world is your oyster.
- 4. Get involved in student media.** It is likely that your school or college will have a magazine or newspaper that you could get involved in to try your hand at reporting and learn more about journalism. If not, why not create something of your own?
- 5. Listen to journalism podcasts.** Podcasts are a perfect way to immerse yourself in the world of journalism, particularly as they're so easy to pick up while you're on the move, whether travelling to school or college, running or eating your breakfast. **Turn to page 21** for more information about podcasting and the top journalism podcasts to listen to.
- 6. Start your own YouTube channel.** Does presenting or working in TV or radio appeal to you? Perhaps you're really outgoing or want to improve your confidence? Starting your own YouTube channel could help develop those skills and build a community around you. Just make sure you are armed with plenty of ideas!



DO YOU WANT TO BE A JOURNALIST?

7

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Report

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THE GOLDEN RULES OF JOURNALISM

Being a journalist is a privileged position to be in in society and it comes with an enormous amount of responsibility. Here are our golden rules for how to be a good journalist:

JOURNALISM ETHICS. Journalists abide by common values that guide them to ensure they carry out their work in an ethical and moral way.

OFF THE RECORD. Journalists have a moral obligation to protect their sources and shouldn't reveal what someone has said 'off the record' – unless they can find out that information elsewhere.

UNDER-REPORTED. It is a journalist's job to give a voice to communities that are under-served by the media and shine a spotlight on stories that could go unreported.

RESEARCH. Doing background research before interviewing and cross-referencing information will ensure that every aspect of the story is accurate, and accuracy is key.

NEWS. Be a consumer of news. Knowing what's going on in the world helps journalists to come up with ideas and keep their stories relevant.

ASK QUESTIONS. A journalist's greatest asset is their natural curiosity and their tenacity to keep digging for a story. Don't stop asking questions until you're satisfied you have the full picture.

LAW. It is essential that journalists operate within the confines of media law, which governs what can be published and broadcast.

INTEREST. Journalists report on stories that matter to everyone in society – stories that are in the public interest. A good journalist should get to know their audience and what interests them.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION. You can build contacts both online and in real life. Going out of your way to develop good relationships with them will give you endless sources for stories and quotes.

TRUTH. A journalist's primary mission is to find and tell the truth, discrediting harmful inaccuracies and differentiating between fact and opinion.

GET A HEAD-START WITH THE CFJ

If you are looking for an introduction to journalism before you pursue it further, the Certificate in Foundation Journalism (CFJ) qualification is a great place to start. You can learn the basics, as well as focussing on particular areas of interest.

The CFJ can be studied online via distance learning with the NCTJ, or through a specialist training scheme.



Victoria Scholes recently passed the qualification on a course run by Ability Today for aspiring journalists with disabilities.

She said: "I enjoyed learning about the different types of journalism. When you think about journalism the first thing that jumps into your head is the press and newspapers."

"The course opened my eyes to radio and video and when it came to the radio bulletin module, I kind of fell in love with it.

"I was totally shocked when I found out I had passed the qualification. All the work I submitted passed first time. It feels like a great achievement."

Victoria hopes to continue on to study the Diploma in Journalism and go on to support other disabled people with her work.

SHE SAID: "I WANTED TO ACHIEVE THINGS IN LIFE, I WANTED TO CHAMPION DISABLED PEOPLE WHO WERE BEING LEFT BEHIND AND I DID NOT KNOW HOW. THEN I STARTED THIS COURSE NOT KNOWING WHERE IT WOULD LEAD, AND IT HAS LED ME RIGHT TO WHERE I WANT TO BE."



Sharin Hussain is completing the CFJ during a paid six-month placement with News UK as part of the Government's Kickstart Scheme.

Sharin, who is working as a podcast assistant across talkSPORT, *The Times* and *The Sun*, said: "I wanted to gain experience in the industry and this was a perfect way to do that whilst also getting a qualification out of it."

"I have enjoyed learning and understanding the way podcast production works, particularly with sponsorships and content structuring."

"THE NCTJ COURSE WAS EYE-OPENING AND INFORMATIVE, GIVING ME A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF HOW TO BE A JOURNALIST. THIS SHORT COURSE HAS ALSO INTERESTED ME IN PURSUING THE FULL DIPLOMA."



**Find out more
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Journalism Skills Academy



SKY SPORTS NEWS PRESENTER EMMA PATON TALKS TRAINING, CHALLENGES AND AUTHENTICITY

We caught up with Sky Sports News presenter Emma Paton, who studied for an MA in sports journalism at St Mary's University. She talks about the value of her NCTJ training, the challenges women face in sports journalism and her opportunities to date.

"Be yourself and be brave with it."

This is the advice from Sky Sports News presenter and reporter Emma Paton, who says that being authentic is the best way for your audience to relate to you.

Emma, 31, studied for her NCTJ diploma at St Mary's University in 2011 and, since joining Sky Sports News in 2012, has worked her way up from a sub-editor and producer to presenting live on air.

Drawing from her success, she gave the following advice: "Really just try to be yourself.

It's so hard when you are just starting out, but by being yourself means people can really relate to your work.

"It's important to be authentic, because that cuts through."

As a national 400m runner, her passion for all sports, but particularly athletics, meant sports journalism was a career that piqued her interest.

She said: "I loved sports and I did my undergraduate degree in sports science. But I could never see a career in sports science, I never wanted to be a personal trainer.

"I remember a girl on my course did some work experience on a national newspaper and it got me thinking that that was the line of work I wanted to go down – I wanted to write about sports people.

"After finishing my final year, I was looking at MAs in sports journalism and I needed it to be NCTJ-accredited. Any jobs that I was looking at

wanted you to have your NCTJ diploma, and that's when I found the course at St Mary's."

Emma credits her NCTJ training at St Mary's University for giving her the foundations to succeed in the industry.

She said: "I managed to rack up a number of work experience opportunities and that was all thanks to the support from tutors and guest lecturers. They were able to set things up for me throughout the course."

AS WELL AS SECURING WORK EXPERIENCE, EMMA ALSO LEARNT FUNDAMENTAL SKILLS SHE STILL USES TO THIS DAY, SUCH AS MEDIA LAW AND SHORTHAND.

She said: "Working in the newsroom at Sky Sports News, journalists use their shorthand, especially if you are a reporter. With my 100 words per minute shorthand, I could get a call asking for me to stand outside court tomorrow and I am prepared for that."

When asked about the challenges women face in sports journalism, Emma said it's more accessible than it has ever been.

She said: "I remember when I started on the digital team, there were just two women in a team of 30. That has changed now.

"But as a woman, it is quite daunting. You have got to prove you are good enough and that you know your stuff.

"Looking at sports coverage now, with Kelly Cates and Gabby Logan, plus a female commentating on a men's game, with Emma Hayes, it seems more accessible for women now.

"But you can't have a lazy opinion. There's a microscope on you and there's no room for error.

"It's great that when I speak to students, they don't see this is a barrier in any way. I think that's how St Mary's helped me – the course set me up. We had lots of women in the cohort and female journalists speaking to us.

"They have that positive culture, and cover male and women's sport. It's all about those first experiences."

Another big break came at the end of 2020 as she stepped into the shoes of presenter Dave Clark, fronting the 2021 PDC World Darts Championship.

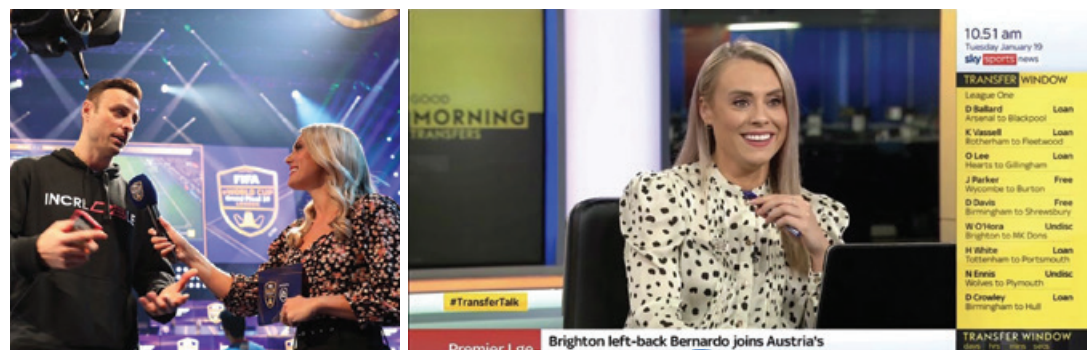
She said: "This was such a big moment in my career to front the world championship darts along with Laura Woods. That's the first time there have been two women together.

"That was a big thing and you put a lot of pressure on yourself, I wanted it to go well.

"Stepping into Dave Clark's shoes was impossible but I just wanted to be myself."

She added: "Fronting the darts is such a big thing for me. Football is one of my loves and hopefully I can front football shows in the future."

WATCH THIS SPACE.



HOW I BROKE THE STORY THAT THE TATE MODERN ATTACKER HAD TOLD CARE WORKERS OF HIS PLAN TO KILL

Investigative journalist Kafui Okpattah describes the “surreal” moment his explosive scoop on the Tate Modern attacker broke, attracting a staggering two million views in 48 hours.

University of Essex student Kafui had spent six months establishing the facts after he'd received a tip-off that Jonty Bravery had confessed his urge to kill a year before he threw a six-year-old boy off a balcony in the Tate Modern.

Kafui, who was working as a researcher at the BBC alongside his journalism studies, was soon contacted by a carer after making enquiries about Jonty's mental health.

He said: “He had some very important information. It was a case of protecting his identity whilst establishing that what he was saying was true.

“It was like a movie. I didn't write his name in my books and I referred to him as ‘Agent X’. He was probably the most important person in my life at the time.

“The first time I met him, we were very quickly able to establish that Bravery had spoken about killing someone a year earlier. There was a recording.”

Kafui, 20, said his first reaction was one of nervousness to do the right thing legally.

He said: “This was just off the back of my first media law exam. I was concerned about the legal implications and that we would be in serious trouble if we were to get this wrong.

“I was worried about defamation and protection of sources.”



AFTER KAFUI RECEIVED THE TIP-OFF IN AUGUST 2019, IT WASN'T UNTIL FEBRUARY 2020 THAT THEY WERE READY TO BREAK THE NEWS AFTER ENSURING THAT THE STORY WAS LEGALLY SOUND.

He said: “The reaction was immense, there were two million views in 48 hours.

“I watched the TV package the day it came out, it was surreal. There was six months of my life.

“When I woke up the next day, I noticed how big it went. As I wasn't allowed to tell people I was working on it, it came as a shock to a lot of people that it had my name attached.”

The exclusive story also won Kafui the student top scoop award at the NCTJ's Awards for Excellence, with judges saying it was “a brave piece of journalism which not only challenged and held those in authority to account, but also brought a very human aspect to a national story”.

Now Kafui works within the investigations team at the BBC as both a producer and reporter. He has reported on teenage money mules, gone undercover at illegal Covid raves and exposed scammers offering fake driving licences.

He said: “I find my own stories and produce my own scripts. It starts off very slow with lots of research and desk work, then I send it to my editor.

“Once he says yes it picks up speed and it needs to be made in time to meet the deadline.”

Talking about how his NCTJ training has helped in his role to date, Kafui said: “Obviously media law is a given. But I am also very grateful to the course for giving me that practical training in editing TV and radio packages.

“I have seen first-hand how not being able to edit a TV package is so frustrating and can annoy the people around you. I am really grateful that I can boot up Adobe and cut the package together. It's so useful to have those practical skills.”

KAFUI'S ADVICE TO THOSE STARTING OUT IN JOURNALISM IS TO “NEVER SAY NO”. HE SAID: “ALL OF MY STORIES HAVE COME FROM WEIRD TIP-OFFS FROM STRANGE ACCOUNTS, BUT REMEMBER THAT EVERYBODY HAS A STORY AND NEVER SAY NO. IT'S OUR PLACE TO LISTEN.”





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"BE HONEST ABOUT WHAT YOU WANT OUT OF YOUR CAREER"

George Steer, breaking news reporter, *Financial Times*

Journalism, I'm reliably informed by colleagues, is all about building relationships. About gaining the trust of sources and gleaning information from people in the know. Doing so is hard when you can't meet face-to-face, but I've thus far avoided the sack, proving there is hope for anyone starting out in the middle of a pandemic.

I joined the *FT* as an intern in the summer of 2019, a lifetime ago. The first words I had published in the paper were for *House & Home*, one of the weekend paper's supplements, on the history of linoleum vinyl flooring, a staple of 1970's kitchens across the UK. If you're already an expert, great. If not, I urge you to read my piece.

Just as my internship was coming to an end, the head of editorial talent called me into her office to ask what it was that I really wanted to be writing about.

Here is my first piece of advice: be honest about what you want out of your career. If I hadn't expressed an interest in politics, I almost certainly would not have landed my next gig at the *FT*.

A few weeks later I started as an editorial assistant to the parliament team, an elite band of reporters who work from deep in the bowels of Westminster Palace. Jobs tend to be what you make of them, so even though most of my duties

revolved around organising meetings with MPs and typing up interviews, I did as much reporting on the side as I could.

Last September, I got what I was after – a 'beat' position, in this case covering transport, logistics and a few big companies. It was a steep learning curve, made harder perhaps by the fact I was working far from colleagues whose throwaway remarks ordinarily do so much to imbue new recruits with the confidence needed to settle into a role.

But it wasn't all doom and gloom. What I missed out on in face-to-face meetings I tried to make up for with my own research, scouring the internet for fresh angles, interesting stats and industry trends. And there's a wonderful device called a telephone that allows you to pester contacts from wherever you please.

That said, I'm dying to get back to the office. I've been working from my kitchen for far too long.



"IT'S NOT A RACE, IT'S A MARATHON"

We spoke to *Evening Standard* reporter and former apprentice Abbianca Makoni, who tells us what it was like to interview the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, in which they called for an end for structural racism in the UK.

Tell us about your career, and how you trained to be a journalist.

I started a print magazine at the age of 15 that focused on social issues affecting young people in my area. It also highlighted the positive things they were doing. I started it as a hobby because I needed something to do outside of my school work.

But it was after the murder of a good friend of mine that I started reading, watching and listening to the news more. I wanted to see how the media covered the issue of violent crime and whether any reporters focused on solution journalism and getting to the bottom of certain issues.

In doing this I came across reporters like Megha Mohan from the BBC, David Cohen from the *Standard* and Jane Bradley from the *New York Times*, who inspired me to pursue a career in journalism so I could tell the stories that mattered.

Megha was kind enough to mentor me for a brief period and she made it clear that I didn't have to go to university to become a journalist. I kept her advice in mind and started searching for other ways into the industry and that's when I came across the *Evening Standard* and PA Training's apprenticeship scheme.

I took copies of my magazine issues to my interview to show them my dedication to the craft and thankfully I got the job. I was 18 when I got the role.



Why did journalism appeal to you?

People always say journalists are there to be a voice for the voiceless – I don't think that's true per se. Everyone has a voice but they often don't have the platform to share their story and I think that's where we come in. It's our job to ensure we provide a safe space for them to share their experiences. It's also our job to inform and to challenge – these are some of the reasons I wanted to become a journalist.

The lack of diversity in the industry is another reason why I wanted to at least try to get into journalism because it's important that the media reflects society and its readers. It's important to have a diverse newsroom so diverse stories can be told.

In 2020 you conducted an exclusive interview with the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, can you tell us a bit about that?

This is the interview where Prince Harry and Meghan called for an end to structural racism in the UK as they launched a new campaign to

celebrate Black Brits that have contributed in different ways to help make Britain the country it is today. The list of trailblazers featured youth workers helping girls and boys come out of gangs to those making education more accessible.

What was it like to see your story being picked up by so many news outlets?

The issue of racism is an important topic and I was glad the *Evening Standard* gave it and Black History Month the limelight. I woke up to dozens of messages after the story broke – mainly from young people aspiring to get into journalism – congratulating me on the exclusive.

But really – it was all a team effort and the senior reporters I worked with were very supportive. We were all happy to see our story get so much attention and most importantly to see that the people being celebrated were getting the recognition they deserved.

You won the NCTJ trainee top scoop award 2020 for your interview, what did that mean to you?

It's great to be recognised for your work but I think it hits different when you're recognised for a piece of work you're immensely proud of and one that focuses on a topic you know a lot of people have been impacted by. 2020 was a tough year for so many people and I think celebrating these hard-working individuals brought some positivity.

What is your advice to someone wondering whether journalism is for them?

You'll have some people tell you that you can't do it, you'll have others say it's not for people like you and you might even have people, who mean well, tell you to try a different career path first. But you should believe in yourself, take the leap and just go for it. Get as much experience as you can and don't compare yourself to anyone else – it's not a race, it's a marathon.



BEHIND THE MICROPHONE WITH JACOB GRANGER



Podcast host Jacob Granger insists there's nothing better than just "putting yourself out there" and giving it a go when it comes to getting behind the microphone.

Jacob, 28, is a senior reporter at journalism.co.uk, writing about the latest industry news, whilst also hosting the weekly podcast.

As the host, the Bournemouth University alumnus finds the guests to interview, does the research and preparation, and records and edits it all together.

HE SAYS PODCASTS ARE THE PLACE TO GO FOR A PURE CONVERSATION.

He said: "I enjoy the quality of conversation. I don't like the kind of debate which is just two people shouting on top of each other. I think that stifles the debate and isn't fun for the audience.

"A podcast is a place for crystalising ideas. I love the interview process and that you aren't rushing a conversation.

"It's the only place in journalism to have a lightly-edited pure conversation. In other areas of journalism, lots is left on the cutting room floor but you use most of it in a podcast."

In preparing for each episode, he says he always operates one week ahead, thinking of topics to discuss and finding guests to interview. He then works out with each guest the main topics of discussion.

He said: "Twitter is a goldmine for stories but we also get people coming to us. It's a mixture of being proactive and being selective.

"I think in podcasts, it's acceptable to be more rehearsed too. It's better for the episode if the podcaster is prepared and knows the general areas of discussion. But I always leave room for spontaneous and difficult questions."

Jacob thanks his NCTJ training for giving him the professional grounding as a journalist.

He said: "Media law, ethics and shorthand have all been so useful to me. The NCTJ qualification gives you a professional grounding and the gold standard is what editors look for."

Jacob's main piece of advice is to just give podcasting a go on a topic that interests you.

He said: "The barrier to podcasting is so low. You can talk about what you like with a friend. You can start a podcast about anything.

"If you want to get used to using the mic, start a podcast about something that interests you. It will help you develop your following, your narrative and delivery. Podcasting is all about confidence.

**"TALK TO PEOPLE REGULARLY AND
PUT YOURSELF OUT ANYWHERE
YOU CAN. NOTHING IS STOPPING
YOU EXCEPT YOURSELF."**

JACOB'S ADVICE ON PODCASTING:

- 1. Keep a backup.**
Computers can delete stuff so make sure if you are working in digital journalism that things are backed up.
- 2. Get a good microphone.**
There's an expectancy from the audience for you to have a high level of audio as a host. Get a good mic, or borrow one, or collaborate with someone who has one.
- 3. Volunteer to help in podcasts on work experience.**
While you are on work experience, get involved in podcasts or digital journalism.
- 4. Know how to pronounce people's names.**
It is so important, and nothing kills an interview like getting it wrong. I always, always, always ask if I am just one per cent unsure.

JACOB'S FAVOURITE PODCASTS:

MY MOTHER'S MURDER

An investigation by Paul Caruana Galizia into the life and killing of his mother Daphne Caruana Galizia.

BULLSEYE WITH JESSE THORN

A celebration of the best of arts and culture in public radio form with in-depth interviews.

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Sky News explores the grey zone between war and peace, discovering the covert tactics used by states, criminals and terrorist groups.

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JOURNALISM DIVERSITY FUND



If you're worried about the costs of training, or whether the industry is for you, you could be eligible for a bursary from the Journalism Diversity Fund (JDF).

It is so important that newsrooms are as diverse as their audiences, which is why the JDF was set up.

Bursaries can help with the costs of NCTJ-accredited course fees and/or living expenses while studying.

We spoke to bursary recipient Sanny Rudravajhala about how the JDF helped him study at the University of Salford.

When did you decide you wanted to be a journalist?

I always dreamed of being a journalist. I wrote my first match report aged 13 for my local paper, *The Middleton Guardian*. I'd report on my under 14s football team – we were terrible and lost every game in a season! But writing about our heroic failures every week was something I enjoyed.

I've had a bit of a strange career path as I was a science teacher for nine years! Throughout it though, I kept writing and I kept that dream in the back of my mind until I took the plunge!

What led you to do the NCTJ diploma?

I had got into BBC Radio Manchester through their 'New Voices' scheme and had a podcast documentary series commissioned from BBC Sounds called *Out of Our League*. Despite getting myself 'into the building', I knew the diploma would give me a wider set of skills, especially beyond sport and help me develop my craft as a journalist.

The diploma shows you're capable across a range of skills and tells employers you know how to find a story and make it capture an audience's imagination – whether that's print, radio or TV. I love telling stories and the NCTJ diploma helped give me the skills to do that well!

How did the Journalism Diversity Fund help you?

It would have been impossible for me to study without the JDF. They covered my course fees, which meant I could go and study broadcast journalism at the University of Salford. The course has been really rigorous and helped me develop as a broadcaster and a journalist. Without the JDF I wouldn't have been there at all.

Journalism needs diverse voices because otherwise different stories and perspectives aren't heard. If that happens then we, as a society, all miss out. The JDF has helped me to be able to bring my different outlook and experiences to the newsroom.

What was your NCTJ course like?

It was intense – there's a lot to do and learn and you've got to work really hard to balance all the parts of the course and the rest of your life too. But with that you build your confidence and knowledge

base. Studying media law and public affairs gives you a solid grounding and understanding of how journalism works. Add to that the news writing modules and in my case, broadcast modules and before you know it, you're 'making' news! Shorthand is also tough but it's worth it in the end!

Do you have any tips for people who might be considering applying?

You've got to be willing to work hard and put in the extra effort to do well. It also helps to be a team player and bring ideas to the table.

There are lots of areas of journalism and if you're passionate about something then you can probably find stories within that area and share your passion. Stories are all about people and you can find a news story almost anywhere.

Try and gain work experience where you can and if you're finding it difficult to do so, then do it yourself! In lockdown I created a radio station – Radio Northenden – that helped give me more broadcasting experience when studios and offices were getting closed down.

MOST IMPORTANTLY I'D SAY THAT YOU NEED TO SHOW YOU'RE WILLING TO LEARN AND MAKE MISTAKES AND USE THEM TO HELP YOU DEVELOP.



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APPRENTICESHIP

Cree-Summer Houghton completed her apprenticeship with ITV Central and Bauer Media Group and now works as a trainee for ITV News.

She shares her story:

I had the best time on my apprenticeship, and I can honestly say that if I didn't do it, I don't think I would be where I am now in my career.

I've always wanted to be a journalist but I didn't think that I had the qualifications to apply for a job, and I knew that I didn't want to go to university.

I know that I learn better practically and that is exactly what an apprenticeship had to offer.

The best thing about my apprenticeship was definitely the work environment and the opportunities it gave me.

I had so many opportunities to go out and film on locations, work with reporters, work on the website. So, every single day my skills were improving and then I had my separate training, which was to pass my NCTJ exams.

None of that was easy, I had to study whilst working full-time, but it was the best experience and it really taught me how to manage my time and work in a professional environment.

So, I would say, if you're thinking of being a journalist, and you want to tell people's stories and you want to give people a voice, definitely think about doing an apprenticeship because there's no better way to learn.



DISTANCE LEARNING

Ivan Morris Poxton, from Bedford, is studying for the diploma via distance learning. After graduating from university, he decided to embark on the NCTJ's distance learning programme instead of in-centre training.

He tells us why:

Why did studying by distance learning appeal to you?

I was looking at taking the diploma at university, but was put off by the uncertainty brought about due to the pandemic. The distance learning route offered a way of gaining the diploma regardless of how long pandemic restrictions lasted.

How are you finding distance learning?

It's been great to get back into education after graduating a couple of years ago. Distance learning has worked well alongside freelance writing, which I've increasingly taken up over the past year. I like the flexibility it offers compared with a course with physical lessons.

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Do you have any advice for those considering taking the same route?

Motivation is important and for shorthand, try to find time each day, even if it's only 5-10 minutes. Tutor support is available for each module, and I've found it really helpful to plan ahead what I wanted to cover with them and give the tutors a little notice on the topic areas beforehand.



UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE

Jordan Seward works as a sports journalist at the MailOnline. He studied for a BA in sports journalism at the University of Brighton, gaining the gold standard NCTJ diploma.

Tell us about how you got your job and what it entails.

I first started as a freelancer at the MailOnline a couple of months after graduating. After a year, I was offered a full-time contract. Since then, I have progressed to do editing shifts, where I edit the football page as well as news editing on weekends and night shifts. I also write and build stories, working on headlines and liaising with the picture and video desk. I occasionally do live coverage of football matches too.

How did you choose your course?

When I was finishing my A Levels, I found the sports journalism course at Brighton and it was the perfect option as I am passionate about many different sports and I love writing. It was a match made in heaven. I knew that they were offering the NCTJ and that was a major selling point for me.

How did your training prepare you for your job?

We learnt so many skills that are relevant to my job today. It laid the foundations and helped me break into the industry. The course taught me match

reporting, how to write stories and there's also the legal side of things. As I have got that training, I know which stories are legally sensitive and what potential issues I have to flag. I use my shorthand when interviewing – it's a skill that sets you apart from the rest.

What is your advice for someone interested in journalism?

Make sure you read news all the time. A great tip for writing news stories is to write it how you would tell your friends, get all the key information out at the beginning. Oh, and be prepared to drink a lot of coffee – there are a lot of late nights.



POSTGRADUATE DEGREE

Katy Johnston presents the drive time show at Capital Scotland. She studied for her MA in multimedia journalism at Glasgow Caledonian University.

How did you get your role?

When I was at university, I did lots of work experience. I managed to get an internship on the breakfast show at Capital. I kept hanging around there and I was given shifts to cover early breakfast and then progressed from there. I started on the drive time show in 2019.

How has your NCTJ training helped prepare you for a job in journalism?

I never realised how much you rely on your back catalogue of training until you are in the role. As I'm in front of the microphone, I could say anything but I am constantly reflecting on my training and thinking of the ethical and legal implications – "can I say this?" I am so grateful for the training I have had, it's the best thing I ever did.

Do you have any advice for aspiring journalists?

Don't think any career is out of reach. Have faith and confidence to put yourself out there. Having the NCTJ qualification behind you stands you in good stead. If you are looking at universities and colleges to study journalism, look no further than the NCTJ. People notice it in the newsroom and can trust you.



COLLEGE COURSE

Shazad Hussain works as a communications assistant at Tamworth Borough Council after previously working as a multimedia trainee reporter. He studied for his gold standard diploma at City of Wolverhampton College.

How has your NCTJ training helped in your career?

All the NCTJ modules have been incredibly useful. Learning about public affairs, about how councils work and different committees, is something I am experiencing first hand right now. Videojournalism has also been really beneficial as I am responsible for creating videos for the council's YouTube channel. I'd also say that shorthand is crucial when interviewing, to make sure that you get every single detail down accurately.

Tell us what a typical day entails.

There isn't a typical day, there's never just one task that I am working on. I have been creating newsletters for businesses, creating videos, sorting social media posts, writing press releases and collaborating with councillors on different projects. There's always something interesting to work on and it's a job that keeps me on my toes.

Any tips for prospective students?

Don't be afraid to try out new things that make you nervous. For me, I wasn't comfortable with using video editing software but thanks to the NCTJ training I have received, I'm more comfortable and I'm enjoying it more and more. Throw yourself into new things, it's the only way you can figure out if you enjoy it.



FAST-TRACK

Vicky Gayle studied on a fast-track course at News Associates Manchester and now works at the Bureau of Investigative Journalism as a health inequality reporter in the Bureau Local team.

She shares her story:

The fast-track course at News Associates was ideal because it was a short timeframe. To be honest, I wouldn't have got my first job on the *Colchester Gazette* without the NCTJ – it sets you up for an entry level job. Many of the practical skills I learnt were exactly what was expected of me on the paper.

In my role I am looking at health inequality issues across the UK and digging into them. I have always been someone who liked to do research, and investigations seemed more suited to me. My day varies depending on what we are doing. I could be reporting or following up on the impact of stories and there is a lot of reading, researching and reaching out to contacts.

My advice for aspiring journalists would be: don't think you have to go to London to be a journalist – you can write wherever you are. If you are a strong journalist, you can make it anywhere. Just make sure to hone your newsgathering skills, especially if you want to go down the freelance route as it's all about being able to find stories.

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Kafui Okpattah (photographed), a final-year BA Multimedia Journalism student has won the Student Top Scoop award at the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) Awards for Excellence 2020.

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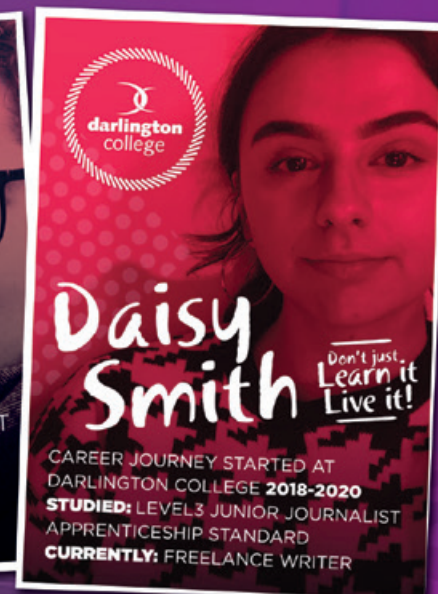
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