

**NATIONAL QUALIFICATION  
IN JOURNALISM**

**REPORTERS**

**Examiners' Report**

**July 2014**

# NATIONAL QUALIFICATION IN JOURNALISM FOR REPORTERS

July 2014

In July, a total of 69 candidates sat the National Qualification in Journalism (NQJ) across nine centres. The NQJ was awarded to 50 candidates – a pass rate of 72 per cent.

## AWARD WINNERS

### **TED BOTTOMLEY AWARD (MEDIA LAW AND PRACTICE – £250)** **Sponsored by Midland News Association**

Paul Berentzen

*Blackpool Gazette*

Paul showed excellent knowledge which he applied sensibly to the scenarios. He got off to a flier with a near-perfect answer to question one and his other two answers were also extremely good. Paul was up-to-date with changes in the law and made correct reference to the Defamation Act 2013 and made good use of case studies. In question three he identified the problems that would arise in such circumstances and put forward sensible discussions on how to deal with them to avoid falling foul of the Editors' Code of Practice, yet fulfilling the paper's public interest in publishing details of a serious crash.

### **ESSO AWARD (NEWS REPORT – £250)**

Paul Berentzen

*Blackpool Gazette*

Paul produced a thorough, detailed story which engaged the reader from beginning to end. Part B demonstrated mature newsroom skills which were well above average. A very well-deserved winner of this award.

### **SOCIETY OF EDITORS' AWARD (NEWS INTERVIEW – £250)**

Paul Berentzen

*Blackpool Gazette*

Paul wrote an excellent story. He has a mature style and provided a good strong intro combined with tight, concise language with no wasted words. His story captured the drama and flowed well. The news interview assessor commented that Paul had logical questioning and pieced the story together well.

### **NEWSQUEST AWARD (LOGBOOK – £250)**

Megan Tatum

*Essex Chronicle*

An excellent logbook submission from Megan and one that is a clear example to anyone setting out to compile the best of their own material. Clearly a lot of hard work has gone into this with a wide range of stories included, showing the breadth of her talent.

The following candidates, listed in alphabetical order by surname, have now gained the National Qualification in Journalism for Reporters.

<b>Forename</b>	<b>Surname</b>	<b>Company</b>
Andrew	Baber	<i>Wiltshire Times</i>
Kate	Banks	<i>Sale &amp; Altrincham Messenger</i>
Ashley Jay	Barnard	<i>Darlington &amp; Stockton Times</i>
Rebecca	Bastable	<i>Chichester Observer</i>
Richard	Beecham	Yorkshire Weekly Newspaper Group
Paul	Berentzen	<i>Blackpool Gazette</i>
Neil	Bracegirdle	<i>Suffolk Free Press</i>
Gavin	Caney	<i>Eastern Daily Press</i>
Thomas	Carlisle	<i>Horncastle News</i>
Man Yee	Chow	<i>The Sentinel</i>
William	Cook	<i>Burnley Express</i>
Jacobus	Couvee	North London & Herts Newspapers
Patrick	Daly	<i>The Herald, Plymouth</i>
Sian	Davies	<i>The Herald, Plymouth</i>
Philip	Dewey	<i>Slough Express</i>
Lewis	Dyson	<i>Sheerness Times</i>
Katy Louise	Griffin	<i>Midweek Herald</i>
Nick	Gutteridge	<i>Reading Chronicle</i>
Emma	Hardwick	<i>Saffron Walden Reporter</i>
Jennifer	Hardwick	Courier Media Group
Kirsty-Ann	Hewson	<i>Congleton Chronicle</i>
Rachael	Hook	Courier Media Group
James	Illingworth	<i>Wigan Evening Post</i>
Ben	Leo	<i>The Argus</i>
Olivia	Lerche	<i>Chichester Observer</i>

Charlotte Hannah	Lilley	<i>Express &amp; Star</i>
Hanna	Ljunggren	<i>Banbury Guardian</i>
Anna	Mauremootoo	<i>Wiltshire Gazette &amp; Herald</i>
Gayle	McDonald	<i>Daily Echo</i>
Mark	McKay	<i>Oxford Mail</i>
Rosa	McMahon	<i>Eastern Daily Press</i>
Anne	Moore	<i>Wiltshire Gazette &amp; Herald</i>
Thomas	Murphy	<i>Westmorland Gazette</i>
Katriona	Ormiston	<i>Oxfordshire Guardian</i>
Ann-Marie	Parry	<i>Press and Journal (Aberdeen)</i>
James	Podesta	<i>Cambridgeshire Times</i>
Craig	Saunders	Courier Media Group
David	Sharman	<i>Blackpool Gazette</i>
Jonathan	Sharman	<i>Surrey Comet</i>
Christopher John	Shimwell	<i>Chichester Observer</i>
Kathryn	Snowdon	<i>Watford Observer</i>
Megan	Tatum	<i>Essex Chronicle</i>
Katie	Upton	<i>Blackpool Gazette</i>
Jonathan	Vale	<i>East Anglian Daily Times</i>
Gareth	Vickers	<i>Blackpool Gazette</i>
Daniel Lee	Willers	<i>Pocklington Post</i>
Kate Louise	Wilson	<i>Stroud News &amp; Journal</i>
Heloise	Wood	<i>News Shopper</i>
Hannah Rose Mellor	Worrall	<i>Driffield Times</i>
Simone	Yates	<i>Lancashire Telegraph</i>

## CHIEF EXAMINER'S SUMMARY

Results from the July 2014 NQJ had the examiners reaching for the record books. The overall pass rate of 72 per cent is certainly the best in recent history for both the NQJ and its predecessor the NCE.

The percentage pass rate in July 2014 tops the March 2014 figure when 62 per cent of candidates achieved the industry's senior qualification.

Examiners remain keen to point out that the pass rate in no way represents a "dumbing down" in the marking criteria used for the exam, which remains as robust and rigorous as ever. It appears more likely that candidates, their editors and their trainers are becoming increasingly focused on the key and enduring industry skills that make up the DNA of a good senior reporter – the ability to report the spoken word in an engaging and newsworthy fashion, the ability to conduct and interpret a good interview with someone who has a story to tell, and the ability to write it in the context of legal constraints and ethical soundness.

Whatever platform the story is delivered on, those values remain timeless and it is encouraging to see candidates and their mentors appreciating that.

The second "first" is the outstanding success of Paul Berentzen of the *Blackpool Gazette* who was selected as the award winner for three of the four awards offered for the best submission in each section of the NQJ. To be adjudged the nation's best in one category is an achievement in itself. To do it in three sections is remarkable. Congratulations to Paul, who should feel incredibly proud of this achievement.

The number of candidates who sat the NQJ in July was lower than previously seen (mostly due to fewer resit candidates), just 69 candidates, when numbers have previously been around 80-100.

The NQJ is without doubt seen by the whole media industry – not just newspaper editors - as the benchmark for competence. It is the passport that opens doors to the full spectrum of media careers.

Congratulations to all the successful candidates.

## **MEDIA LAW AND PRACTICE** – 54 candidates; 42 passed – 78 per cent

The encouraging results of the past two exams have continued in the July 2014 sitting of the NQJ.

Again, there were some excellent answers to the ethics question that showed candidates not only understand the problems they face as journalists, but also know what to do to overcome them. The vast majority of candidates passed this question and there were very few outright failures.

Defamation and contempt was thoroughly tested, and by and large candidates spotted the dangers that came up in the scenarios. One area of concern was that a number of candidates did not appreciate the potential contempt issue in question one when publishing a picture of someone who has been charged. However, overall the question was generally handled well.

In question two most candidates gave good answers to why a Section 39 order should not be put on the dead boy, but not many highlighted the fact that his sister would not be involved in proceedings so she should not be made a subject of the order. However, most candidates pointed out that in any case she would have been too young to have been affected by the publicity.

Again, candidates with a good writing style and a logical approach tended to do better. A bullet-point approach when answering these questions is recommended, but candidates are not penalised if they do not adopt this approach.

Candidates who had kept up-to-date with changes in the law, particularly the introduction of the Defamation Act 2013, were rewarded, as was relevant citing of case studies. The time has come for candidates to refer in future to the 2013 Act where it is relevant.

Examiners recommend that future candidates return to *Essential Law for Journalists* to brush up on defamation and contempt dangers and defences. Regular visits to the PCC adjudications and the Editors' Code of Practice, along with the Judicial Studies Board's Reporting Restrictions in the Criminal Courts, would also be helpful. The Independent Press Standards Organisation will be in operation by the next NQJ exams, but candidates will not be expected to make reference to it as the Editors' Code of Practice will still be in use.

For those who passed, many congratulations, and for those who did not, plenty of revision for your next attempt.

### **NEWS REPORT** – 67 candidates; 50 passed – 75 per cent

The news report was based on a planning application by Network Rail to build a commuter car park, the effects commuter parking had on the town of Chelton and a bid by Humbria District Council to introduce permit parking for residents living near the station.

There were two distinct strands to the story – the Network Rail planning application and the permit parking plan. Both were strong newsy angles and needed to be high up in the story, or used as two separate stories, an option few chose to use.

Accuracy is vital for a journalist and while a good number of candidates passed the news report in July, some disappointing errors were noticeable in some stories.

The permit parking plan was going to the council for consideration on 14 July, but several candidates wrote that the Network Rail application was to be decided on that date. Ninety thousand commuters used the line in the past year, not Chelton station, and £6 was the average daily charge at other stations, not the charge that would be implemented at Chelton. Errors like these often result in corrections having to be published.

Candidates seemed to have difficulty painting a clear picture of the situation and how parking issues affected the town. Some advice to candidates would be to take a step back and read the story you have written as if you are a resident: Do you understand it? Has it covered all the key aspects?

Many candidates picked up on the residents' problems caused by commuters parking in their roads, but few included the industrial estate aspect and the problems being faced by businesses.

It was pleasing to see that the copy generally was clean and stories flowed well. However, full and accurate quotes were lacking in some stories which suggests shorthand is still an issue for some. Candidates must remember that if they passed 100wpm at the beginning of their careers, they must continue to practice to maintain the level, as the speech read in the NQJ exam varies between 90 and 120wpm.

In Part B candidates need to remember that their ideas must be realistic and appropriate.

Congratulations to all who passed.

## **NEWS INTERVIEW** – 61 candidates; 49 passed – 80 per cent

This was a story about a hit and run, when a well-known woman in a small village was pinned between a car and a church wall after a car lost control whilst racing another car along the village high street.

Four women were involved as the car careered out of control. Three, including the seriously injured woman, Mrs Agnes Tetlow, who was the former head teacher of the local school and chair of the WI, were villagers so all would be well-known in the area. They had been making the final arrangements for a flower show at the church.

Mrs Tetlow's granddaughter performed a heroic move when she pushed one of the women out of the way of the car.

The driver of the crashed car was seen staggering with blood on his head, and the other driver was heard to shout at him: "Come on Pete, I think you've killed her" before they fled.

Another villager witnessed the incident and said there had been trouble with "boy racers" using the straight road into the village. The two cars were speeding at up to 60mph in a 30mph zone.

There was plenty here for candidates to get their teeth into, with lots of drama and also biographical details about the local women.

Some candidates did not seem to grasp the story and did not follow the chronology through, or got confused – they need to take a couple of minutes to digest what the story is about before they attempt to write their story.

It appears some candidates did not leave enough time to read their finished story thoroughly and therefore left in some silly errors and literals that could have been avoided.

Some candidates failed to include any of the drama, and some did not give details of the women – they would be very well-known in the area.

There was a lack of precision in some candidates' work and others lost marks for going over the word count. Important details such as car registrations should have been included. One candidate managed to write the whole story without mentioning who they had interviewed.

There was good use of quotes and many picked up the "Come on Pete, I think you've killed her" line.

Overall the standard was good.

## **LOGBOOK** – 48 candidates; 46 passed – 96 per cent

We are pleased that the response to the e-logbook continues to be positive and that there have been no major issues with the use of this format.

Presentation is now much clearer and the addition of a second candidate's choice key task and the social media sections have been well received.

As with the paper logbooks however, candidates are reminded that where they are asked to include additional documentation via PDF or other format then they must double-check to make sure that this has been added.

There are some areas where candidates must make sure they are clear on the distinction between key tasks. One of these is the difference between politics and councils/committees. The criteria on each are clear yet some submissions are sitting in the wrong section.

The key task *writing to pictures* is also one where candidates should make sure that they are fulfilling what is expected of the submission.

We would advise all those undertaking the e-logbook to make sure that if they are unsure of anything then in the first instance they should seek help from their editor or trainer or contact the NCTJ and we will be happy to give advice.

Congratulations to all who passed.



## National Qualification in Journalism for Reporters

### Comparative figures

(Pre March 2013 figures are for the National Certificate Examination)

	NOV 2011	MAR 2012	JUL 2012	NOV 2012	MAR 2013	JUL 2013	NOV 2013	MAR 2014	JUL 2014
<b>TOTAL ENTRY</b>	<i>NCE</i>	<i>NCE</i>	<i>NCE</i>	<i>NCE</i>	<i>NQJ</i>	<i>NQJ</i>	<i>NQJ</i>	<i>NQJ</i>	<i>NQJ</i>
No of candidates	101	107	100	106	110	102	88	90	69
No of passes	53	48	43	56	59	50	54	60	50
No of failures	48	59	57	50	51	52	34	30	19
<b>% passed</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>72</b>

<b>FIRST-TIMERS</b>									
No of candidates	63	63	53	54	66	51	49	55	48
No of passes	35	30	20	28	33	32	32	38	35
No of failures	28	33	33	26	33	19	17	17	13
<b>% passed</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>73</b>

<b>RE-SITS</b>									
No of candidates	38	44	47	52	44	51	39	35	21
No of passes	18	18	23	28	26	18	22	22	15
No of failures	20	26	24	24	18	33	17	13	6
<b>% passed</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>71</b>

Analysis of figures for each exam section (first-timers and re-sits)

	NOV 2011	MAR 2012	JUL 2012	NOV 2012	MAR 2013	JUL 2013	NOV 2013	MAR 2014	JUL 2014
<b>NEWS INTERVIEW</b>									
No of candidates	88	96	92	89	99	89	71	75	61
No of passes	53	40	57	52	53	58	54	57	49
No of failures	35	56	35	37	46	31	17	18	12
<b>% passed</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>NEWS REPORT</b>									
No of candidates	94	95	87	98	103	96	79	83	67
No of passes	58	50	40	55	49	57	52	57	50
No of failures	36	45	47	43	54	39	27	26	17
<b>% passed</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>75</b>

<b>MEDIA LAW &amp; PRACTICE</b>									
No of candidates	86	89	89	91	97	86	86	83	54
No of passes	60	39	48	55	55	37	59	71	42
No of failures	26	50	41	36	42	49	27	12	12
<b>% passed</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>78</b>

<b>LOGBOOK</b>									
No of candidates	63	64	54	56	66	51	51	55	48
No of passes	62	62	52	56	65	49	51	54	46
No of failures	1	2	2	0	1	2	0	1	2
<b>% passed</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>96</b>