

NATIONAL QUALIFICATION IN JOURNALISM

Examiners' Report

July 2018

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6 July 2018

In July, a total of 36 candidates sat the National Qualification in Journalism (NQJ) at 5 centres across the country. The NQJ was awarded to 17 candidates – a pass rate of 47 per cent.

AWARD WINNERS

THE MEDIA LAW AWARD (MEDIA LAW AND PRACTICE – £250)

Isabella Cipirska

Worthing Herald

A joy of a paper that was near to perfection. In fact, Question 3 received full marks. Isabella expressed herself clearly and logically, making good use of bullet points for clarity. She showed both excellent knowledge and application in all sections. A worthy winner!

ESSO AWARD (NEWS REPORT – £250)

Kirstie Smith

Leamington Spa Courier

Kirstie demonstrated a good, solid all-round approach to both sections, producing a vibrant, accurate story with sound suggestions in part B.

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

Keri Trigg

Shropshire Star

Keri's copy was error free and had all the elements of a great read. It was well constructed, with a good high quote and captured the drama of the incident, with lots of salient facts.

NEWSQUEST AWARD (LOGBOOK – £250)

Tanzila Ali

Eastern Daily Press

An excellent logbook and one that would be a good example to anyone setting out to compile the best of their own material. A good deal of hard work has clearly gone into this submission with a wide range of impressive stories included, showing a breadth of talent. Judges were particularly impressed by strong submissions in the trainee's choice key tasks which showed well developed story-telling and a keen eye for detail.

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

Luke	Adams	<i>Reading Chronicle</i>
Tanzila	Ali	<i>Eastern Daily Press</i>
Beth	Baldwin	<i>The Mail</i>
Frances	Berry	<i>Herts Advertiser</i>
Rebekah	Chilvers	<i>Lynn News</i>
Isabella	Cipirska	<i>Worthing Herald</i>
Rachael	Dodd	<i>The Herald, Plymouth</i>
Reece	Hanson	<i>The Mail</i>
Aimee	Jones	<i>Shropshire Star</i>
Jack	Marshall	<i>Burnley Express</i>
Holly	O'Flinn	<i>Lincolnshire Echo</i>
Rosalyn	Roden	<i>Bury Times</i>
Kirstie	Smith	<i>Leamington Spa Courier</i>
Megan	Titley	<i>Lancashire Evening Post</i>
Keri	Trigg	<i>Shropshire Star</i>
Chloe Marie	West	<i>Louth Leader</i>
Stephen	Wynn-Davies	<i>Worthing Herald</i>

SUMMARY

A total of 47 per cent of trainees in the July sitting of the National Qualification in Journalism (NQJ) exams achieved the qualification.

Out of the 36 candidates who sat the exams, 17 were successful in all four parts – media law and practice, news report, news interview and e-logbook – achieving ‘senior journalist’ status.

There was a pass rate of 77 per cent in the media law and practice exam, up from 65 per cent in the previous sittings in March. The moderator confirmed that candidates were strong on question 1, whilst question 2 proved more challenging. Question 3 produced a number of excellent answers with candidates not only being aware of the main clauses involved, but applying them to the scenario.

The July NQJ saw a 100 per cent pass rate for e-logbook, the fourth in succession since July 2017. The moderator said: “An excellent round of submissions showing that trainees have a clear grasp of what is required from the logbook key tasks.”

The news report exam had an overall pass rate of 47 per cent. The moderator said: “Very few candidates demonstrated shorthand which was capable of coping with the 90-120wpm speech. It is essential that trainees not only get to the basic 100wpm but then work on increasing their speed to 120wpm during the training period.”

There was an overall pass rate of 59 per cent in the news interview exam. The moderator confirmed that whilst poor shorthand and story construction were key issues, there were some good pieces submitted by successful candidates who showed they understood the chronology of the story. Successful candidates constructed their copy so it was readable and easy to follow, containing the drama, all the relevant facts, and backed up by strong quotes.

An outstanding performance by Isabella Cipiriska, of the *Worthing Herald*, saw her win the £250 media law prize with a mark of 93 per cent.

Special congratulations also go to the other three prize winners who each receive £250: Kirstie Smith (*Leamington Spa Courier*) for news report; Keri Trigg (*Shropshire Star*) for news interview; and Tanzila Ali (*Eastern Daily Press*) for e-logbook.

MEDIA LAW AND PRACTICE – 30 candidates; 23 passed – 77 per cent

A pleasing set of papers, with few outright failures and a couple of excellent papers, particularly from the award-winning candidate.

Most candidates were strong on question 1, which tested knowledge and application of defamation and contempt dangers in publishing a police appeal for help over a crime and the defences available. It also had elements of absolute privilege, Section 11 of the Contempt of Court Act 1981 and copyright law as well as some ethical elements.

Question 2 proved more challenging, especially the first part of the question. This required candidates to look at the dangers posed in a report of a court case. Here examiners were looking for knowledge and application of absolute privilege, the headline which went with the report had a serious inaccuracy, the dangers of breaching the Sexual Offence Act 2003, the charge was of indecent exposure, by including too much jigsaw detail and breaching both Clause 7, identifying under 16s involved in sex cases whether a victim or a witness, and Clause 12, discrimination, as the man’s disability had no relevance to the court case. This question was based on a recent

ruling by IPSO against the *Brighton Argus* and shows the importance for candidates to keep up to date with both the law and ethics.

Question 3 produced a number of excellent answers with candidates not only being aware of the main clauses involved, 4, 5 and 8, but applying them to the scenario. Going into private areas of a hospital require executive permission, sensitivity is required when talking to grieving people or reporting inquests and too much detail of how people take their own lives is not only insensitive but breaches the code and has landed papers in trouble. There were also a few poor answers. These may have been due to candidates not giving themselves enough time to consider the question before trying to answer it.

Examiners recommend that future candidates return to the latest edition of *Essential Law for Journalists* to brush up on defamation and contempt dangers and defences and court reporting restrictions, plus case studies. Regular visits to the IPSO adjudications and the *Editors' Code Book*, along with the Judicial Studies Board's Reporting Restrictions in the Criminal Courts, would also be helpful. Both *HoldtheFrontPage* and *Press Gazette* cover the more important IPSO rulings and have regular law and ethics articles. Those candidates who do not attend an NQJ refresher are put at a great disadvantage.

For those of you who passed, congratulations, and for those who did not, plenty of revision, and good luck with your next attempt!

NEWS REPORT – 36 candidates; 17 passed – 47 per cent

The July news report exam paper detailed a story of twin brothers arrested on suspicion of drug smuggling in Peru.

There is the ongoing issue with the standard of shorthand – not getting down full quotes, or not being able to read them back and guessing at the words. Few candidates demonstrated shorthand which was capable of coping with the 90-120wpm speech. It is essential that trainees not only get to the basic 100wpm but then work on increasing their speed to 120wpm during the training period.

Part A is a test of the trainee's ability to blend existing and new information into one comprehensive story. With more stories being uploaded straight to the web and updated regularly in news rooms today, candidates must not forget the importance of being able to write one comprehensive story, telling the reader the fundamentals of the story to help them understand it. There was an assumption from some candidates in this exam that because the story had been broken by the nationals it was sufficient to write a story based on the speech alone. This is not the case. Candidates must be able to blend the information from the candidate's brief with new information from the speech into one comprehensive story – they should not write an update on another media company's story.

In part B, there was a lack of ideas for following up the original story.

NEWS INTERVIEW – 32 candidates; 19 passed – 59 per cent

Raiders break into an auction house and steal artwork and jewellery worth £1m in an incident which lasted just 10 minutes.

The auction lots were expected to fetch more as they were being sold by a charity which had been left a Picasso, a Hockney and jewellery by the town's late, well-known businessman and benefactor Sir Henry Marshall. He died six months before and left the items to Cancer Research in memory of his wife, Helen, who died from breast cancer.

This was a straightforward story with drama – the two raiders disabled the alarms and CCTV cameras and locked a security guard in a store room in what appeared to be a professional crime. They spoke twice, once telling the guard not to “do anything stupid” and telling him what they wanted. On the second occasion, the guard overheard them saying they had what they wanted and their “boss would be pleased.”

There were good quotes to be had – from the auction house boss, the police and the security company boss. There was also good background detail about Sir Henry and a full description of the items stolen and their value. However, many candidates appear to have struggled and there seemed to be a lack of attention to detail.

It was evident that some candidates had poor shorthand and some had not read through their copy before it was submitted, therefore not spotting easily avoidable errors.

Story construction needed improvement and several candidates introduced comment where it was not necessary. Spelling was also an issue.

There were some good pieces submitted by successful candidates who showed they understood the chronology of the story and also constructed their copy so it was readable and easy to follow, containing the drama, all the relevant facts, and backed up by strong quotes.

LOGBOOK – 22 candidates; 22 passed – 100 per cent

An excellent round of submissions showing that trainees have a clear grasp of what is required from the logbook key tasks. Examiners were delighted that with the exception of just one key task from one candidate, all logbooks were completed and submitted correctly.

It was also pleasing to note that a far greater number of logbooks were both completed and submitted well ahead of schedule, demonstrating a greater degree of organisation among candidates.

We would advise all those compiling a logbook to make sure that if they are unsure of anything they should seek help from their editor or trainer in the first instance, or contact the NCTJ and we will be happy to give advice ahead of submitting for marking.

National Qualification in Journalism for Reporters - comparative figures

	JUL 2015	NOV 2015	MAR 2016	JUL 2016	NOV 2016	MAR 2017	JUL 2017	NOV 2017	MAR 2018	JUL 2018
TOTAL ENTRY	<i>NQJ</i>	<i>NQJ</i>	<i>NQJ</i>	<i>NQJ</i>	<i>NQJ</i>	<i>NQJ</i>	<i>NQJ</i>	<i>NQJ</i>	<i>NQJ</i>	<i>NQJ</i>
No of candidates	72	71	69	76	59	57	53	63	42	36
No of passes	44	43	51	59	40	41	35	49	23	17
No of failures	28	28	18	17	19	16	18	14	19	19
% passed	61	61	74	78	68	72	66	78	55	47

FIRST-TIMERS										
No of candidates	49	51	50	57	43	43	41	43	33	23
No of passes	28	33	36	45	27	33	32	36	19	13
No of failures	21	18	14	12	16	10	9	7	14	10
% passed	57	65	72	79	63	77	78	84	58	57

RE-SITS										
No of candidates	23	20	19	19	16	14	12	20	9	13
No of passes	16	10	15	14	13	8	3	13	4	4
No of failures	7	10	4	5	3	6	9	7	5	9
% passed	70	50	79	74	81	57	25	65	44	31

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

	JUL 2015	NOV 2015	MAR 2016	JUL 2016	NOV 2016	MAR 2017	JUL 2017	NOV 2017	MAR 2018	JUL 2018
NEWS INTERVIEW										
No of candidates	63	59	61	71	52	54	50	60	42	32
No of passes	49	43	47	60	35	42	35	47	27	19
No of failures	14	16	14	11	17	12	15	13	15	13
% passed	78	73	77	85	67	78	70	78	64	59

NEWS REPORT										
No of candidates	70	68	66	71	56	54	51	63	42	36
No of passes	45	44	52	56	40	39	34	49	23	17
No of failures	25	24	14	15	16	16	17	14	19	19
% passed	64	65	79	79	71	72	67	78	55	47

MEDIA LAW & PRACTICE										
No of candidates	61	60	59	65	49	50	48	46	37	30
No of passes	47	45	53	59	39	41	47	41	24	23
No of failures	14	15	6	6	10	12	1	5	13	7
% passed	77	75	90	91	80	82	98	89	65	77

	JUL 2015	NOV 2015	MAR 2016	JUL 2016	NOV 2016	MAR 2017	JUL 2017	NOV 2017	MAR 2018	JUL 2018
LOGBOOK										
No of candidates	49	56	55	61	46	43	41	45	33	22
No of passes	42	53	50	58	45	42	41	45	33	22
No of failures	7	3	5	3	1	5	0	0	0	0
% passed	86	95	91	95	98	98	100	100	100	100