

Coronavirus and the NCTJ: FAQs for candidates

We understand that candidates will be concerned about how the coronavirus pandemic might affect their NCTJ studies and exams.

We are working closely with our centres, and taking advice from our regulators and other public bodies, to plan for a range of scenarios.

We hope the following FAQs will be helpful to candidates. As the coronavirus pandemic is an evolving situation, these FAQs will be updated as required. Any updates will be communicated with centres and candidates.

These FAQs should be read in conjunction with the NCTJ's coronavirus contingency plan. The latest version of the plan can be found on the NCTJ website

I'm a student on an accredited course, are my exams still going ahead?

The NCTJ has considered the latest advice given by the government on 18 March in relation to the coronavirus pandemic.

Currently, the NCTJ is continuing to honour the dates in our exams calendar and it is up to individual centres to decide whether or not they are able to run upcoming exams. You should therefore continue to follow the arrangements of your centre and if you have any questions about whether a forthcoming exam is going ahead you should contact your centre directly.

A special consideration will be given by the NCTJ for any individual candidate who is unable to take their exam/assessment due to symptoms of COVID-19 or because they have visited a category 1 country/area within 14 days of the exam date, or because government advice is for them to self-isolate in their specific circumstances. Your centre is responsible for requesting this special consideration directly with the NCTJ. Once approved, this will allow your centre to defer your exam sitting to another date in the NCTJ exams calendar at no additional cost.

My accredited course is due to finish in the summer, will I have time to sit all my exams if they are postponed in April, May and June?

Centres that are unable to run exams in April, May and June may move their NCTJ course end date to accommodate any postponed exams or late portfolio submissions. This will ensure all candidates have the opportunity of sitting exams at a later date and completing their portfolios within the timeframe of their course.

To accommodate postponed exams, the NCTJ is looking at the possibility of offering additional exam dates to ensure no candidates are unfairly disadvantaged by the coronavirus pandemic. For example, we may decide to run additional diploma exams in August and/or September/October, including additional shorthand exams.

We are aiming to make a decision on whether we can offer additional exam dates in the coming weeks, and any additional dates we are able to offer will be published with the NCTJ's 2020-21 exam date schedules in April.

My centre has closed, how do I know what arrangements are in place for remote learning?

You will need to discuss this directly with your centre. Decisions regarding the centre's status (whether they are closed or remain open) and arrangements for remote learning are

made by centres individually and they are responsible for communicating these decisions to their candidates. Our centres are working hard to do the best they can in very difficult circumstances to provide the quality training they are accredited by the NCTJ to deliver.

I'm a distance learner, when will I be able to sit exams?

The NCTJ has considered the latest advice given by the government on 18 March in relation to the coronavirus pandemic.

We have decided to postpone exams in April 2020 for national candidates who elected to sit at an NCTJ exam centre. This is because the venues we use are very likely to be closed and we are following the government's advice on social distancing. Currently exams for national candidates who elected to sit in-office can still take place and candidates should follow the arrangements of their newspaper office.

I'm a trainee journalist, am I still able to sit the NQJ exams in July?

The NCTJ has considered the latest advice given by the government on 18 March in relation to the coronavirus pandemic. Currently, NQJ exams on 3 July 2020 are going ahead as planned.

Can I still order distance learning materials and books?

Yes, distance learning materials and other shop orders are still being dispatched by post as normal.

I sat the NQJ in March, will my results be delayed?

No, results for the March NQJ exams will still be issued on 7 April as planned.

Are national shorthand exams still going ahead?

The NCTJ has considered the latest advice given by the government on 18 March in relation to the coronavirus pandemic.

We have decided to postpone shorthand exams in April 2020 for national candidates who elected to sit at an NCTJ exam centre. Exams for national candidates who elected to sit in-office can still take place and candidates should follow the arrangements of their newspaper office.

I'm a Community News Project reporter, how will my training be affected?

Community News Project reporters should continue to follow the guidance of their training providers and employers regarding any forthcoming exams.

As with GCSEs and A Levels, if I can't sit my exams can the NCTJ award my qualification based on results from mock exams and coursework?

The NCTJ will not apply special considerations permitting the awarding of predicted grades or mock assessments, the substitution of exams for another type of assessment, or any adjustment to marking standards. This is to ensure vocational and employer requirements are met, to ensure assessments are fair across all candidates, to maintain the integrity of NCTJ qualifications, and to uphold the industry standard in relation to current journalism practice.

The NCTJ believe it is fairer to reschedule exams as soon as possible rather than estimating grades based on previous performance or asking educators and trainers to try to make judgments about their candidates' professional skills and competence.

I'm completing a junior journalist apprenticeship and I'm worried about doing my final project. What should I do?

You should discuss your project with your training provider and/or your employer. You can delay submitting your project if your course end date is extended by your training provider and if your employer approves an extension to your apprenticeship contract.

I'm a Certificate in Foundation Journalism distance learner and I was intending to submit assessments in the upcoming March deadline for marking. What should I do if I can't do this because of the coronavirus pandemic?

If you are unable to submit a CFJ assessment for marking in the upcoming March deadline, you can submit in the June 2020 deadline instead. If you are unable to wait until the June deadline, please contact the NCTJ directly to discuss alternative arrangements.

My university has told me their priority is awarding me a journalism degree. Will this be accepted as the equivalent to the diploma by employers if I am unable to return to sit the NCTJ exams?

The NCTJ does not accept exemptions, equivalences or recognised prior learning for any part of its qualifications. This is to ensure vocational and employer requirements are met, to ensure assessments are fair across all candidates, to maintain the integrity and validity of NCTJ qualifications, and to uphold the industry standard in relation to current journalism practice. Degrees are academic rather than industry standard qualifications and achievement of the Diploma in Journalism, especially at gold standard, is what many editors look for in their recruitment.

The NCTJ is working closely with all our centres to reschedule exams where required and to extend course end dates, to ensure all candidates have the opportunity to complete their diploma qualification.