

## **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 23 March in relation to the coronavirus pandemic and has taken the decision to postpone all diploma exams in April 2020, including shorthand exams. These exams will be rescheduled in August 2020. All centres currently booked for exam dates in April will be contacted by the NCTJ to arrange a deferral at no additional cost. Exam dates in August will be published in April with the NCTJ's exam calendar for the 2020-21 academic year.

The NCTJ will review the guidance issued by the government in three weeks' time to decide whether NCTJ exams will go ahead in May 2020. For exams in May onwards, you should 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 rescheduled 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.

The NCTJ will be offering exam dates in August to accommodate exams rescheduled from April 2020. The NCTJ is also looking at the possibility of offering exam dates in September and October. Exam dates in August (and September/October, where applicable) will be published in April with the NCTJ's 2020-21 exam date schedules.

### **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 revised guidance issued by the government on 23 March and has taken the decision to postpone all diploma exams in April for national candidates. This includes in-office sittings. The NCTJ will rearrange these exams to a date later in the NCTJ exams calendar, and exam sittings will be deferred to this time. The NCTJ will contact all affected candidates once rescheduled dates are available.

The NCTJ will review the guidance issued by the government in three weeks' time to decide whether NCTJ national exams will go ahead in May 2020.

**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 23 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. Please note that postage times may vary.

**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 revised guidance issued by the government on 23 March and has taken the decision to postpone all diploma exams in April, including shorthand, for national candidates. This includes in-office sittings.

**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 reschedule your end-point assessment submission if your course end date is extended by your training provider and if your employer approves an extension to your apprenticeship contract.

The ESFA have published their apprenticeship response to the coronavirus pandemic which can be found on the gov.uk website [here](#). This response outlines the new measures being implemented by the ESFA to make it easier for apprenticeships to continue and complete in a different way if they need to or to break and resume an apprenticeship later when that becomes possible. Apprentices are advised to read through this guidance carefully and discuss any alternative arrangements required with your training provider and employer.

**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.