

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?

All diploma exams in April, including shorthand exams, were postponed. The NCTJ has published additional exam dates in August and September with the NCTJ's exams calendar for the 2020-21 academic year which was made available on 17 April. These dates can be found in tutor resources.

The NCTJ will be running exams remotely in May and June 2020, so candidates can sit their exams securely at home. This will be for all diploma subjects, including shorthand. Our intention is to continue to offer remote exams to candidates in July, August and September as well, until exams can be sat in centre again. The first exam to be delivered remotely will be journalism for a digital audience on Wednesday, 13 May. The first shorthand exams will be delivered remotely on Thursday, 28 May and Friday, 29 May. Shorthand exams on Thursday, 14 May and Friday, 15 May have been postponed.

For all exams 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 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?

If you are unable to sit exams remotely in May and June, your centre 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 in centre at a later date and completing their portfolios within the timeframe of their course.

The NCTJ has published additional exam dates in August and September to accommodate exams rescheduled from April 2020. These additional dates were published on 17 April with the NCTJ's 2020-21 exam date schedules. These are available to view in tutor resources.

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?

All diploma exams in April and May for national candidates have been postponed, including in office sittings and national shorthand exams.

The NCTJ has rescheduled national exams from April and May to dates in June and July – these new dates were published on 17 April alongside the NCTJ exam date schedules for 2020-21. All national candidates who had their exams postponed in April and May will automatically have their bookings transferred to the rescheduled dates. These exams will be delivered remotely.

Bookings for national exams in July will be open as normal and our intention is to deliver these exams remotely as well.

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

Currently, NQJ exams on 3 July 2020 are going ahead as planned and our intention is to deliver these exams remotely. The NCTJ will be in touch with NQJ candidates enrolled for the July exams and their editors at the beginning of June with further details.

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.

Are national shorthand exams still going ahead?

All diploma exams in April and May for national candidates have been postponed, including in office sittings and national shorthand exams.

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Bookings for national exams in July will be open as normal and our intention is to deliver these exams remotely as well.

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?

Because the Diploma in Journalism and NQJ are designed to assess occupational competence, the NCTJ will not follow a policy of estimating grades for these qualifications. This includes accepting exemptions, equivalences or recognised prior learning, or applying

special considerations permitting the awarding of predicted grades or grades from mock assessments. 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 adapt or 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 June 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 June deadline, you can submit in the September 2020 deadline instead. If you are unable to wait until the September 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 arrange remote sittings or reschedule exams where required and to extend course end dates, to ensure all candidates have the opportunity to complete their diploma qualification.