

Nottingham Trent University Course Specification

Basic Course Information

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| 1. | Awarding Institution: | Nottingham Trent University. |
| 2. | School/Campus: | Arts and Humanities: City Campus |
| 3. | Final Award, Course Title and Modes of Study: | BA (Hons) Journalism
FT |
| 4. | Normal Duration: | Three years |
| 5. | UCAS Code: | P502 |

6. Overview and general educational aims of the course

The BA Honours degree in Journalism is a vocational degree that combines practical training in journalism with a solid academic base. Taught by staff with substantial experience in the media, and situated in purpose built accommodation, you will learn the skills needed to work as a journalist across all platforms. You will also learn media law, politics, and an understanding of the role of the media within society. By the end of the course, you will be equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to work as a multiplatform journalist on newspapers, magazines and web-only media brands.

The course is distinctive in the following ways:

It is accredited by the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ), and was the top-rated undergraduate course in 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017. On completion of the course you will also graduate with the NCTJ Diploma in Journalism as well as your degree.

The new degree will combine the skills and knowledge of the previous degree, while updating them to focus on digital journalism, in line with current industry practice.

It is supported at all levels by strong links with journalism across all platforms including local and national newspapers, magazines, the BBC regionally and nationally, ITV regionally and nationally.

Opportunities for placements are available for all students to prepare you for the world of work, and provide valuable contacts for your future.

Visiting professors who have included Ian Mac Gregor from the Sunday Telegraph, Jon Snow of ITN's Channel 4 News, and James Reynolds from the BBC.

The course is made-up both practical and academic modules.

The teaching staff have substantial experience in the media.

The educational aims of the course are to:

Provide a course of study that will allow you to develop the knowledge and skills needed to work in journalism across a range of platforms.

Educate you to a competent level of theoretical and critical understanding of the practices and processes of the media in contemporary society.

Train journalists of the future who have an informed and responsible awareness of the role of media in society.

Provide an education to foster cognitive and transferable skills useful in the development of your future career potential and employment.

Encourage you to present an argument in a variety of formats in a clear, lucid, rigorous and creative manner.

Conduct learning and teaching within a supportive, academic and media sensitive environment.

Develop your skills and qualities to enable you to be a confident and ambitious graduate.

7. Course outcomes

Course outcomes describe what you should know and be able to do by the end of your course if you take advantage of the opportunities for learning that we provide.

Knowledge and understanding

By the end of the course you should be able to:

Describe and discuss the major traditions within the study of journalism. **(B)**

Identify and recognise emerging trends in the study of journalism. **(B)**

Critically appraise and demonstrate relevant knowledge of the cultural, historical, social, political, economic, regulatory, legal and ethical context and discourses around journalism. **(B)**

Demonstrate knowledge and application of the practical skills relevant to a career in journalism. **(B)**

Recognise and criticise industry structures and practices in journalism. **(B)**

Plan, design and execute a rigorous programme of research in a chosen topic. **(B)**

Demonstrate an awareness of contemporary controversies about news production. **(B)**

(B) : Indicates that the outcome has been mapped to the Journalism Benchmark standard. The Journalism benchmark standards form part of the Media & Communications national framework for describing the content and standards of a bachelor's degree with honours in the discipline of Journalism. The Benchmark standards are also heavily informed by the National Council for the training of Journalists (NCTJ).

Skills, qualities and attributes

By the end of the course you should be able to:

Demonstrate your ability to work collaboratively, manage time and develop interpersonal skills to be able to make a full contribution to your chosen career. **(B)**

Demonstrate proficiency in finding, evaluating and managing information and sources of information. **(B)**

Demonstrate effective written, oral, visual and electronic communication skills. **(B)**

Read and analyse visual and aural form. **(B)**

Demonstrate the capacity for independent critical thought, rational inquiry and self-directed learning. **(B)**

Apply knowledge and skills to different news formats and apply news judgement in a variety of situations. **(B)**

Assimilate and synthesise diverse ideas. **(B)**

Relate information to theory, and theory to practice. **(B)**

Take professional standards to the workplace and recognise your responsibility as a local, national and international citizen. **(B)**

Research, produce and manage multiplatform journalism output and demonstrate competency in practical skills of relevance to a career within journalism. **(B)**

Undertake progressively more demanding independent/self-directed study/learning, and be flexible and adaptable. **(B)**

Articulate and manage the skills profile you have developed through your studies and recognise the opportunities these present to you in the graduate labour market. **(B)**

(B): Indicates that the outcome is mapped to the Journalism Benchmark standard. The Journalism benchmark standards form part of the Media & Communications national framework for describing the content and standards of a bachelor's degree with honours in the discipline of Journalism. The Benchmark standards are also heavily informed by the National Council for the training of Journalists (NCTJ).

8. Teaching and learning methods

The curriculum content reflects the requirement for the students to achieve a competent level of performance across a range of core practical and critical inquiry modules. You will work to develop the foundations skills needed to become an effective journalist. Modules are complementary, enhancing core knowledge. All modules are delivered and designed by staff whose interests and expertise most closely relate to that provision and need.

Teaching methods vary from module to module, but given the dynamic range of activities on the programmes of study, you will benefit from a vibrant and challenging programme of lectures, seminars, tutorials, mock news days, court and local authority visits, group working, e-learning and other practical workshops.

Learning and teaching support is comprehensive; all modules are supported by module guides, staff are available for you to seek individual assistance and you are also encouraged to use electronic communication with tutors and fellow students. Your feedback is actively sought and your comments inform future development of modules. All modules are also supported by web based learning materials.

The **Practical Strand** is taught across all three years. These modules aim to develop the skills you'll need to work as a multiplatform journalist. In the first year, you'll be taught basic journalism skills with a digital focus in *Practical Journalism*. This includes writing, researching news, interviewing, social media, and online journalism skills including basic recording and editing skills and an introduction to mobile journalism.

In the second year, you will build on the first year's digital skills, and through the NCTJ Diploma examinations you will learn about writing for, and producing work for, both newspapers and magazines, including design, headlines and the use of photographs. Students take the NCTJ exam in Essential Journalism during the second semester of second year. This is one of the elements required for the NCTJ Diploma.

All students will take part in news days which replicate industry practice and work to strict deadlines to produce work for online via the CBJ Target news blog as well as newspapers and magazines. Teaching and learning in the third year builds upon these skills.

The **Placement** forms a core part of the course you will study. The placement is not perceived as work experience, nor as time out studying to test theory against practice. Rather it is the natural extension of professional training and practice taking place at the University. The placements enable you to test out your competency, to learn how to use specialised equipment and to develop your confidence in working with different teams. The placement provider completes a placement logbook, providing useful feedback on your time with their organisation. Placements are taken across the country on a wide range of newspapers, magazines, and online news outlets, including working on Notts

TV.

Knowledge of **media law** is a vitally important part of your course of study. To that end media law is a core module at all three levels of the course. On the whole, media law is delivered through lectures and seminars, plus tutor support. Students are also encouraged to visit the courts and transfer their understanding of law to practical news day activities. The success in this area is attributable to creative and imaginative teaching and learning in a subject that needs to be brought to life for and made relevant to your needs as a student and your future career as a working journalist.

You may also study **Journalism, Ethics and Society** as an optional module of this course. Here again, teaching and learning takes place within a dynamic framework. You will explore ethical and regulatory issues through lectures, visiting speakers and class activities.

Politics and **Social Theory** are also core subjects and are taught through a variety of methods and integrated into other modules to ensure that students have a sound knowledge of the political systems in the UK, are able to apply that knowledge to their journalistic practice, and are also in a position to examine and analyse these organisations.

There are also optional modules in **sport** and **celebrity** journalism, which will explore these key aspects of the industry through lectures, student presentations and visiting speakers. Other optional modules on level 5 are **Political Journalism, Global Journalism, Photojournalism** and **Fashion Journalism**.

The third year builds on the work in levels 4 and 5 brings together the skills you have learned in a series of newdays during which you will produce news stories and features for a newspaper/magazine and online. You will also produce a synoptic essay, which allows you to review and reflect on all of the vocational skills, abilities and journalism practice you have gained during your degree.

Within the practical strand of this year, you will take the NCTJ exam in Production Journalism – one of the seven elements required to gain the Gold Standard Diploma. Optional modules at level 6 include **PR and Comms, Magazine Journalism** and **Data Journalism** to reflect widening employment opportunities for graduates and the changing nature of how journalism and the media source and produce material for their audience. Students can also choose to study more academic 20 credit optional modules in **Celebrity Journalism** and **Challenge and Conflict in Journalism**.

In the final year **News Feature Project**, the research skills and professional practice elements of your course are brought together. Students are required to produce a critical research essay into a topic of their choice and from that make a journalism feature for either a newspaper or magazine, together with a double-page spread for a print product and an online version of the feature. This is regarded as a challenging but rewarding part of the course. This work is taught through a variety of master-class

lectures and also one-to-one supervision sessions across the year.

Shorthand is also taught in third year, and this is one of the seven elements required to achieve the Gold Standard NCTJ Diploma. You need to gain 100wpm for this element.

There is also the opportunity, in the third year, for a number of students to take **the Notts TV pathway**. This involves working as an intern within the newsroom of Notts TV, one of a number of hyper-local television stations licensed by Ofcom across the UK, broadcasting its programmes and producing its linked website from NTU'S city campus. At the end of the second year all students are given the opportunity to apply to take the Pathway, as an alternative route of study, in their final year. Successful applicants will have achieved at least a 2:1 in their law module, demonstrated a commitment to working at the station, through previous work experience during university holidays, and through conversations with staff about their suitability for this internship.

In place of the core *Practical Production* module (40 credits), and two other optional 20-credit modules, Pathway students will complete two 40 credit modules – *Journalism at Work* and *The Group Documentary Project*. Assessments for *Journalism at Work* consist of portfolios which reflect your intern work during your attachment at Notts TV and on CBJ news days. The attachment will be organised around a 2-week rotation with students spending one week working with the Notts TV news team and the alternate week attending scale-up workshops and working on a group project, guided by CBJ tutors, that will result in a television programme with a linked online presence. The Pathway is designed to bring together all the skills and knowledge of the first two years of the course, whilst also providing valuable real-world experience of working in a newsroom. On the Notts TV Pathway you will also produce a Group Project with other interns in the form of a TV documentary, plus associated assessments, for *The Group Documentary Project*, so you gain experience of long-form journalism as well as news production.

Students on this route will also take the 40-credit *News Feature Project* module, as core, alongside all other third years.

In addition, to extend this opportunity for work experience to everyone enrolled on BA Journalism, all third year students, as part of the Practical Production module, will be rotated in small groups to spend one week at Notts TV during term-time. During this rotation you will be supported by the Notts TV co-ordinator, and professional staff at Notts TV, as well as module staff. This is designed to enhance your CVs with skills that will improve your employability.

9. **Assessment methods**

The assessment policy for the BA (Hons) in Journalism is inclusive, flexible and provides diverse, wide-ranging and progressively more challenging approaches to assessment as you advance through your studies.

The majority of modules are 20-credit and year-long, modes of assessment do vary from one module to another but assessment 'equivalence' between modules is ensured. The News Feature Project, at level 6, is weighted at 40-credits, reflecting both its length and the importance as are the practical modules at all three levels. All modules make extensive use of coursework (essays, reports, reviews, biographies, portfolios of practical work, presentations (group and individual), some are entirely assessed in this way whilst others include a seen or unseen examination. All examinations are assessed anonymously as is some coursework.

Students on the Notts TV pathway will take the 40-credit *Journalism at Work* and 40-credit *The Group Documentary Project* modules. Its assessment includes two portfolios of work taken from Notts TV and CBJ newdays for *Journalism at Work* and a year-long group project to produce a TV documentary and a reflective essay *The Group Documentary Project*.

Assessment is co-ordinated between modules at each level to ensure both diversity and the spread of submission dates, whenever possible. Module specific criteria are published in each module guide. These are guided by University and School statements on levels of achievement but defined for each module in relation to specific learning outcomes. You are assessed on the basis of your knowledge and understanding, discipline specific skills, intellectual skills and key skills.

Module teams annually review assessment tasks, and all assessments are internally moderated. All module assessment is summative, but at level 4 it fulfils a formative role for both subject development and degree outcomes. The third year practical module includes a synoptic review of the vocational skills, abilities and journalistic practices you have gained during your degree.

Feedback is given through both extensive annotations on your work and a coversheet returned with further formative comments. Standards are quality assured by the subject external examiner who moderates all level 6 modules including the News Feature Project.

In summary: to support teaching & learning and to measure learning outcomes, the type and variety of assessments you'll come across include the:

- Essay.

- Presentation.

- Portfolio of a wide range of professional practice competencies.

- Reflective essay.

- Placement logbook.

- Examination.

- Class test.

10. Course structure and curriculum

Modules on the BA (Hons) Journalism are complementary: each year builds on the knowledge and skills of the previous year. Broadly, you will undertake four 20 credit modules, and one 40 credit module in the first year of the course, and two 20 credit modules and two 40 credit modules in your final year. Each module is taught over the whole year in the first and third years, and where an examination is required this will take place at the end of the academic year. Other forms of assessment may be required at other points in the year. The second year is split into two semesters, when you will take three 20 credit modules in each semester, with assessments, including exams, at the end of each semester.

In the **first year**, you will learn basic journalism skills with a particular focus on digital journalism, in the *Practical Journalism* module. This is a forty-credit module in which you will learn how to research news, write for online, interview, and have some basic technical training in audio and video recording and editing, and mobile journalism.

To complement this you will study a module called *Covering the Courts*, which is a 20-credit module. It includes the English legal system, courts, reporting restrictions, contempt, along with an introduction to court reporting. The NCTJ Court Reporting exam is taken under this module, and is the first of seven elements required to achieve the NCTJ Diploma.

A broad knowledge of politics is given in *Democracy in Action* (20 credits). This looks at the structure of the British political system, how it works, how different branches interact and relates it to the work of journalists. Attached to this module is the NCTJ Public Affairs exam, which counts towards the NCTJ Diploma.

In order to understand the role of journalists and social media you will also study *Social Media* (20 credits). This examines how journalists rely on social media in terms of promoting and sharing their stories with a wider audience and as a newsgathering tool, sourcing information and contacts.

The other module in your first year is *Media Matters* (20 credits). This will help you build up a knowledge of key issues that affect both the media and the world at large, and will help to inform your journalism.

The **second year** runs as two semesters with core modules in the first half of the year to allow students the opportunity to study journalism abroad in the second half of the year.

Students will take *Multiplatform Journalism* (20 credits) in the first semester. This will build upon the digital journalism skills acquired in the first year, and bring in writing and producing news for newspapers and magazines. In the second semester you will take *Creative Journalism* (20 credits) which will introduce you to news days. These days simulate real conditions and provide you with the experience of reacting to breaking news and working to tight deadlines under the constraints of a working newsroom. These modules also prepare you for some of the NCTJ Diploma exams taken during the second year, including the Essential Journalism exam (second semester).

In the first semester, all students will also be given further law training in *Keeping out of Court* (20 credits). This module will cover issues like defamation, privacy, human rights, election law and copyright. Attached to this module is the NCTJ Regulations Test, a compulsory element of the NCTJ Diploma.

To complement this you can also learn about media regulation and ethics in *Journalism, Ethics and Society* (20 credits), *Political Journalism* (20 credits) or *Fashion Journalism* (20 credits).

In the second semester, as well as the specialist practical module, all students have the option to take the 20-credit *Sports Journalism* module. Other options are *Global Journalism* (20 credits) or *Photojournalism* (20 Credits). Students select two optional modules.

By the end of your second year you will be competent to work in a real newsroom, and your placement generally takes place between Easter and the start of the new academic year. This will be three-weeks of placement with either online news organisations, or a newspaper or a magazine. You will be given help to find suitable placements and guidance on how to prepare for the experience.

In your **third year** you will continue to do news days in *Practical Production*. This is a 40-credit module and will include a synoptic assessment which allows you to reflect on all the skills and knowledge you have learned throughout your degree studies. During this year you will also complete the NCTJ exams needed for the Diploma – this comprises of the Production Journalism exam, shorthand, where you need to gain 120wpm, and the E-portfolio - a collection of 10 pieces of work that you will produce over the second and third year practical strands of the course.

Legal training continues with the optional *Challenge and Conflict in Journalism* module (20 credits) which examines the range of theoretical and practical challenges and conflicts faced by journalists by considering issues including Freedom of Information, official secrets, protection of sources, and the internet and law.

In the optional *Celebrity Journalism* module (20 credits) you can examine this increasingly important part of the industry through lectures and student presentations.

You may wish to focus on the world of *PR and Comms* in the optional 20 credit module, where you will learn how to create a PR campaign and analyse the differences between news journalism and the world of PR.

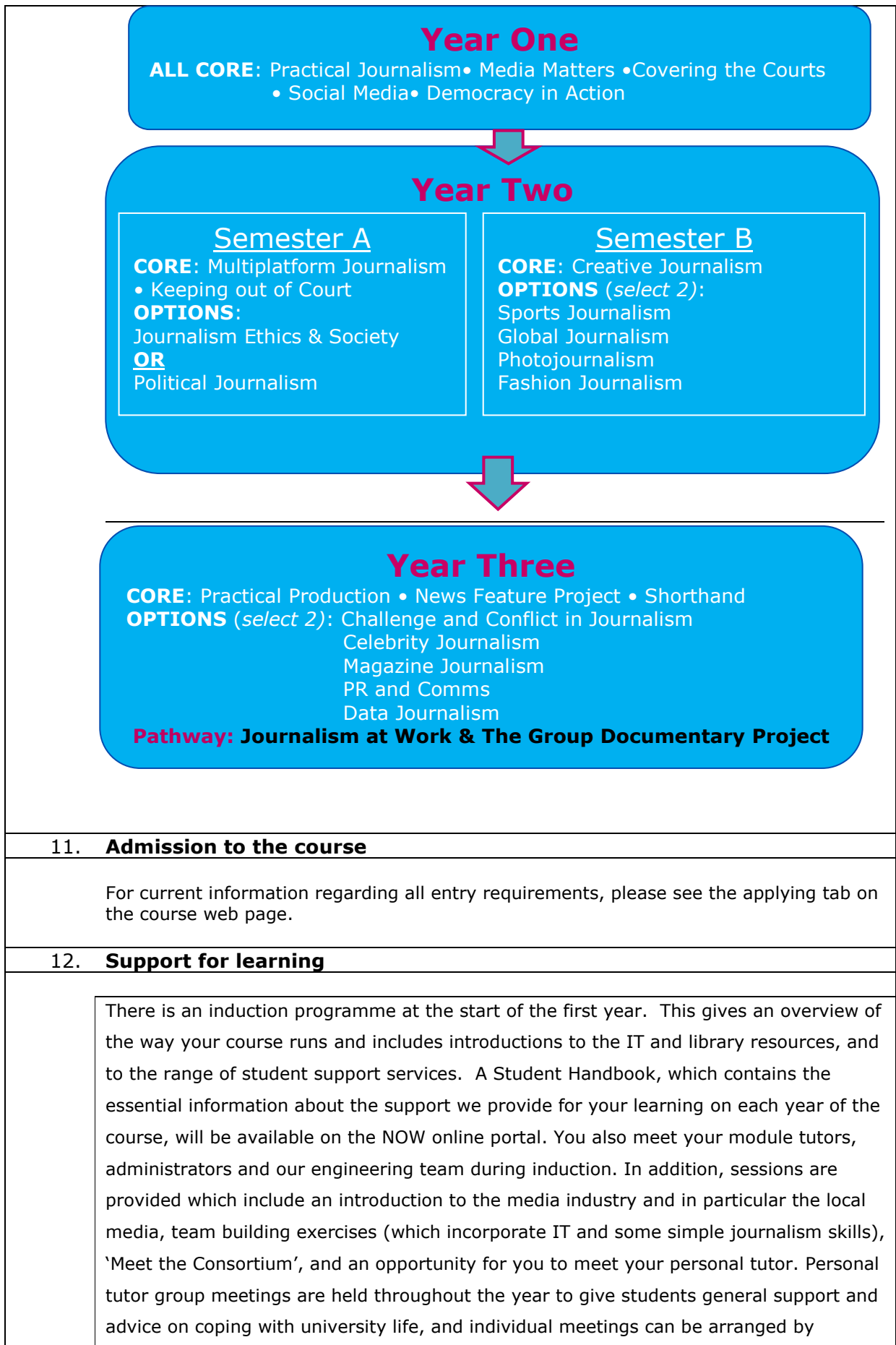
Another option at level 6 is *Magazine Journalism* (20 credits) where you will develop knowledge of this sector and focus on analysis of different genres of magazines as well as learn how to produce a magazine for a specific market.

Finally you may opt for the module on *Data Journalism* (20 credits) looking at the increasing importance and value data has for journalists in developing stories.

You have the option to select two of the above optional modules.

The culmination of the theory and practice you have learned over the course is brought together in the *News Feature Project*. This is a 40-credit module that combines advanced research skills with a topical feature for either a newspaper or magazine, and an online artefact. This module is a showcase for the wide range of skills you have gained over the three years of the course, and it has attracted very favourable comments from external examiners. Features done for this module have also gone on to win national student journalism awards.

A small number of students will take the *Notts TV Pathway* in place of the core *Practical Production* module (40 credits), and two other optional 20-credit modules taken by other third year students. Pathway students will complete portfolios of work for assessment, produced during their attachment to the station and at CBJ, while completing the 40-credit module *Journalism at Work*. The attachment will be organised around a 2-week rotation with students spending one week working with the Notts TV news team and the alternate week attending scale-up workshops and working on a group project, guided by CBJ tutors, that will result in a television documentary with a linked online presence as assessment for the second 40-credit module taken by Pathway students, *The Group Documentary Project*. The Pathway is designed to bring together all the skills and knowledge of the first two years of the course, whilst also providing valuable real-world experience of working in a newsroom.



appointment at any time.

'Welcome back' events are also held at the start of levels 5 and 6.

Extensive module information, including learning materials and module news, is provided on NOW, the university's online portal. This also includes course information such as the course handbook and assessment information and deadlines. NOW can be accessed from off-campus. There are many workstations on campus with access to IT resources available 24 hours, 7 days a week. There is a well-equipped library, which offers extensive electronic learning resources.

You can seek academic support from your tutors both through electronic communication and during posted office hours, which allow one-to-one contact between you and your tutor. The School operates a Study Skills Support process for all students. The School has a dedicated Academic Support Tutor who offers study skills support and advice for students. This is backed up by the University Student Support Services who offer extensive advice and guidance on a range of issues, e.g. financial problems, dyslexia and disability and personal problems.

https://www4.ntu.ac.uk/student_services/

You will be given assistance in your placement preparation by the Centre's Placement Co-ordinator and you will be assigned an individual supervisor for your final year project work.

Preparing for **life beyond graduation** is also integral to your course of study. You will be provided with career support initiatives, these include sessions on CV writing and also preparing for job interviews.

13. **Graduate destinations/employability**

Graduate employability is fundamental to the strategic aim of Nottingham Trent University, as reflected by the fact that NTU is consistently placed close to the top of the league table of all UK Universities for graduate employment. A government survey in 2009 named Nottingham Trent as having the top level of employability in journalism in the UK.

Our journalism graduates possess a wide range of professional, academic and transferable skills which provide the foundation for a successful career. The programme is designed to equip students with the skills required for the research, production, presentation and management of news across a range of platforms. Training in this subject develops professional, personal and transferable skills, often leading to early

career advantages in a number of highly competitive areas of the media.

Because of the vocational nature of this course, there are very strong links with the media throughout the three years of study. These particularly come in to play when students do their placement. In order to get a placement you have to submit your CV and an application letter, and sometimes even go through an interview. This is invaluable experience for life after university, and often students gain paid employment following their placement. To supplement this you will also be invited to special sessions in your third year to give you advice on how to prepare for interviews, and the best way to present your CV. Members of the CBJ Consortium and graduates also visit the Centre to pass on their experience of working in the media and how to approach interviews.

Our journalism graduates are currently working in newspapers, magazines and online news outlets, as well as in a range of communication industries.

14. **Course standards and quality**

Course standards are monitored in a variety of ways:

- A course committee, which includes membership from undergraduate students at all levels of study, monitors student feedback about the course and individual modules
- Student evaluation of modules is sought via through module feedback questionnaires;
- You will be provided with feedback on all assessed work;
- The course has two External Examiners from other UK Universities who submit annual reports on the standards and quality of the course;
- The subject benchmarks of the Quality Assurance Agency have been incorporated into the course's learning outcomes.
- The quality of courses is regularly reviewed by the University as part of its quality assurance and enhancement processes. The latest review of courses within the School of Arts and Humanities was in December 2015.
- The National Council for the Training of Journalists Diploma subjects have been incorporated into the subject's learning outcomes.

15. **Assessment regulations**

This course is subject to the University's Common Assessment Regulations (located in Section 16 of the Quality Handbook). Any course specific assessment features are described below:

There are no course specific exceptions from the University's Common Assessment Regulations.

16. **Additional Information**

Collaborative partner(s):
Course referenced to national QAA
Benchmark Statements:

Notts TV; CBJ Consortium.
For QAA purposes Journalism is placed
within the QAA definition of
Communication and Media studies.

Course recognised by:

National Council for the Training of
Journalists. (April 2018)

Date this course specification
approved:
Any additional information:

Dec 2018