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**Programme Specification**

**Title of Course: PgDip/MA Journalism**

**Date Specification Produced: September 2012**

**Date Specification Last Revised: March 2021**

This Programme Specification is designed for prospective students, current students, academic staff and employers. It provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the intended learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if they take full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the teaching, learning and assessment methods, learning outcomes and content of each module can be found in the Course Handbook on Canvas and in individual Module Descriptors.

**SECTION 1: GENERAL INFORMATION**

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| **Title:** | PgDip/MA Journalism |
| **Awarding Institution:** | Kingston University |
| **Teaching Institution:** | Kingston University |
| **Location:** | Penrhyn Road campus, Kingston University |
| **Programme Accredited by:** | National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) |

**SECTION2: THE PROGRAMME**

1. **Programme Introduction**

This course is designed to equip students with the knowledge and skills both to engage critically with issues and debates in the world of journalism and to compete effectively for employment in the journalism industry. It requires students to carry out in-depth research and analysis to a high level on central issues and developments in contemporary journalism, and to test out their ideas and understanding in a variety of settings and contexts. Students are able to develop a range of relevant practical skills, both individually and collectively, and will be assisted in producing portfolios of print and online journalism over the course of their programme, to demonstrate to employers their ability to work across different media platforms. They are also equipped to take the professional examinations of the course’s accrediting body, the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) leading to the NCTJ Diploma in Journalism. The Diploma is the UK journalism industry’s most widely recognised qualification and is a requirement for employment on regional and local newspapers as well as being highly regarded by other employers. Students cover the NCTJ syllabus and take the professional exams for their NCTJ Diploma during the year, alongside their Kingston University MA. This means that for a single fee, students gain two highly regarded qualifications.

Students can opt either to study for the nine-month postgraduate diploma (PgDip) or for the year-long MA. In both cases, students cover the NCTJ Diploma syllabus and take the exams. MA students take either a dissertation or a practical project in addition to the modules required for the PgDip.

The course has been designed to satisfy the journalism industry’s growing demand for employees with postgraduate qualifications in journalism, and the focus of the course is on professional and career development. This emphasis is particularly in evidence in the module Practical journalism now: multimedia skills and employabilityin which students on both the MA and the PgDip work together to create, design and produce online and print publications as well as undertaking a period on work placement. MA students can also opt for the Practical Journalism Project, which offers them an opportunity to carry out an extended work placement or other relevant journalistic work and produce a substantial portfolio of journalistic work and research as part of a work-based learning project.

The scope and design of the course reflect the particular characteristics of the journalism job market. The majority of employment opportunities where journalistic skills can be applied as a substantial part of the job are to be found in print or online. The underlying technology for news creation and distribution is driving greater convergence between print and online journalism and journalists are expected to be able to write and edit both for traditional print media and for the web, as well as using video and audio to produce multimedia packages for the web. Consequently, the PgDip/MA is deliberately focused on those areas where job opportunities and demand are greatest.

The course team is made up of staff who are practising journalists as well as academics, with wide experience of newspapers, magazines and online journalism. They combine teaching with their own professional work and scholarly research, enabling them to bring the experience of contemporary journalism into the classroom. At the same time, the degree is enriched by guest lectures and workshops from professionals working in range of sectors and media organisations.

The course includes an integrated work placement or placements, which enables students to further develop their professional skills and enhance their employability. From the start of the course, students will begin to work to secure (a) placement(s) suitable for their course and career, supported and advised by the Careers and Employability Services team and the Professional Placement Module Leader. Workshops are provided on CV creation, interview techniques and placement searching, with drop-in sessions to provide additional support. In order to take the Professional Placement module, students need to have arranged a placement, approved by the Course Leader, by the end of their final module (Practical Journalism Project or Dissertation). During the placement students will be supervised (online) by a tutor who, if possible, will visit during the placement. Depending on the location of the placement, meetings might take place face-to-face or via video conferencing platforms. The placement module will make use of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) Canvas for communication and dissemination of information between students and staff as well as making online learning materials available. Students will be required to keep a critical diary of the tasks and duties undertaken during their placement, to provide a framework for a reflective essay and work placement report, which is submitted for assessment at the end of the placement. They will also assemble and collate samples of

work and evidence of achievement produced during their placement which will also be submitted for assessment. Placement providers will be asked to appraise the students’ work and this feedback will be made available to the student. The placement module will be assessed on a pass/fail basis.

This integrated placement(s) provides students with a valuable opportunity to apply and develop their knowledge and skills in a professional working environment, enabling them to deepen their knowledge of the industry, develop their self-confidence, and strengthen their CV. Students undertaking placement activities are in a stronger position to gain the skills and experience which are valued by employers.

1. **Aims of the Programme**

* To equip students with the necessary skills to compete successfully for employment in the journalism industry
* To develop professional journalism skills in researching, interviewing, writing and editing and in working across print and online media.
* To build up team working and other skills necessary to working effectively in an editorial role
* To create an informed and critical awareness of the forces and dynamics (social, cultural, political, economic and technological) shaping the industry and the working environment of journalists today
* To enable students to develop an ethically informed and critical awareness of the roles and responsibilities of journalists in contemporary society
* To foster a creative and self-reflective approach to students’ own individual and collective practice as journalists
* The two-year programme with integrated placement(s) also provides students with an opportunity to enhance their professional skills, preparing them for higher levels of employment, further study and lifelong learning

**The additional aims of the MA:**

* To develop to an advanced level students’ ability to carry out independent academic research
* To develop to an advanced level students’ ability to reflect critically on their own journalistic practice through work-based learning

1. **Intended Learning Outcomes**

The programme outcomes are referenced to the QAA Master’s Degree Characteristics (2020). There is no benchmark statement relating specifically to Journalism and the Quality Assurance Agency has no published plans to produce one in the near future. The design of the course has been informed by the journalism benchmarks set by the National Council for the Training of Journalists. The awards made to students who complete the course or are awarded intermediate qualifications comply fully with the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (2014). All of the procedures associated with the field comply with the QAA Code of Practice for Higher Education. The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding, skills and other attributes in the following areas.

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| **Programme Learning Outcomes** | | | | | |
|  | **Knowledge and Understanding**  **On completion of the course students will have knowledge and understanding of:** |  | **Intellectual Skills**  **On completion of the course students will be able to** |  | **Subject Practical Skills**  **On completion of the course students will be able to** |
| A1 | key features of professional practice in a variety of settings and contexts. | B1 | think strategically to develop new publications and websites for identifiable markets | C1 | research, interview and use a variety of sources of information to produce original, clear, accurate copy |
| A2 | the different individual roles in journalism e g: reporters, writers, editors and the impact of the changing shape of the industry on these roles. | B2 | analyse current and future developments in the production and consumption of journalism and the ability to apply that knowledge to their own practice. | C2 | tackle in-depth investigative stories and analyse documentation to probe beneath the surface of a story. |
| A3 | strategic developments (technological, economic) in print and online markets and how these are shaping the nature of the industry. | B3 | engage critically with wider debates about legal, political and ethical issues and changing relationships between, for example, the media, parliament and the judiciary. | C3 | work with others in an editorial team to choose appropriate content, commission writers and photographers and produce finished print or web pages for public consumption. |
| A4 | the legal, ethical, political and cultural framework within which journalists operate. | B4 | recognise the strengths and weakness in their own writing and in that of others and use this recognition to inform their professional practice. | C4 | negotiate with employers and network with contacts to identify journalism job opportunities. |
|  |  | B5 | **[MA additional learning outcome]:** identify a topic worthy of sustained research, carrying out research and completing a dissertation to an advanced academic and professional standard | C5 | **[MA additional learning outcome]:** apply the significant critical and organisational skills necessary for devising and managing a substantial piece of critical writing |

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|  |  | B6 | **[MA additional learning outcome]:** reflect critically on their own journalistic practice and the current state of the print and online journalism industries in order to complete a work-based learning project . | C6 | **[MA additional learning outcome]:** organise and undertake a substantial work placement in the journalism industry and reflect on their experience in a purposeful and meaningful way.) |
|  |  |  |  | C7 | **[MA additional learning outcome]:** demonstrate professional skills (including self-presentation, communication, interpersonal/teamwork, research and information literacy, numeracy, time-management and project-planning, management and leadership skills, and ethical practice). |

In addition to the programme learning outcomes identified overleaf, the programme of study defined in this programme specification will allow students to develop a range of Key Skills as follows:

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| **Key Skills** | | | | | | |
| **Self-Awareness Skills** | **Communication Skills** | **Interpersonal Skills** | **Research and information Literacy Skills** | **Numeracy Skills** | **Management & Leadership Skills** | **Creativity and Problem Solving Skills** |
| Take responsibility for own learning and plan for and record own personal development | Express ideas clearly and unambiguously in writing and the spoken work | Work well with others in a group or team | Search for and select relevant sources of information | Collect data from primary and secondary sources and use appropriate methods to manipulate and analyse this data | Determine the scope of a task (or project) | Apply scientific and other knowledge to analyse and evaluate information and data and to find solutions to problems |
| Recognise own academic strengths and weaknesses, reflect on performance and progress and respond to feedback | Present, challenge and defend ideas and results effectively orally and in writing | Work flexibly and respond to change | Critically evaluate information and use it appropriately | Present and record data in appropriate formats | Identify resources needed to undertake the task (or project) and to schedule and manage the resources | Work with complex ideas and justify judgements made through effective use of evidence |
| Organise self effectively, agreeing and setting realistic targets, accessing support where appropriate and managing time to achieve targets | Actively listen and respond appropriately to ideas of others | Discuss and debate with others and make concession to reach agreement | Apply the ethical and legal requirements in both the access and use of information | Interpret and evaluate data to inform and justify arguments | Evidence ability to successfully complete and evaluate a task (or project), revising the plan where necessary |  |
| Work effectively with limited supervision in unfamiliar contexts |  | Give, accept and respond to constructive feedback | Accurately cite and reference information sources | Be aware of issues of selection, accuracy and uncertainty in the collection and analysis of data | Motivate and direct others to enable an effective contribution from all participants |  |
|  |  | Show sensitivity and respect for diverse values and beliefs | Use software and IT technology as appropriate |  |  |  |

1. **Entry Requirements**

The minimum entry qualifications for the programme are:

* A good honours degree (typically 2:1 or above) or equivalent, normally in an essay-writing subject, demonstrating high standards of literacy OR
* Evidence of substantial and demonstrable professional commitment to journalism
* International students and others whose native language is not English must have an academic IELTS score of 6.5 with a minimum score of 7.5 in writing (or equivalent) in the written section of the test.

The above will normally be regarded as appropriate admission requirements for the course, though non-standard entrants will always be considered for entry.

All certificated and non-certificated learning will require verification. In the case of certificated learning, this will require the presentation of relevant certificates and/or confirmation from the award-giving body. In the case of non-certificated learning, verification will be established in the course of interview, or, where appropriate, through the submission of supporting documentation and evidence.

**Admissions procedures**

The MA Journalism admissions tutor will normally consider all applications in the first instance. All applicants who fulfil, or are likely to fulfil, the admissions requirements will be invited for an interview with senior members of the teaching team and will be required to demonstrate competence in a news-writing and sub-editing test. The decision regarding offers of places will be made by the admissions tutor after interviewing the applicant. The course leader and admissions tutor will receive administrative support from the postgraduate course administrator.

1. **Programme Structure**

This programme is offered in full-time, part-time mode and ‘with Professional Placement’, and leads to the award of PgDip/MA Journalism. Intake is normally in September.

**E1. Professional and Statutory Regulatory Bodies**

National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ)

**E2. Work-based learning**

Work placements are a requirement of both the PgDip and the MA. Students are required to do at least two weeks’ placement and it is the responsibility of individual students to source and secure such placements. This allows students to reflect on their own personal experience of working in an applied setting, to focus on aspects of this experience that they can clearly relate to theoretical concepts and to evaluate the relationship between theory and practice.

Work placement is an integral part of the two-year programme and students will receive support from the award winning Careers and Employability Services team.

While it is the responsibility of individual students to secure appropriate placements, the Careers and Employability Services team offers each student support at all stages of the application process, including writing CVs, completing application forms, participating in mock interviews, assessment centre activities and psychometric tests. Sourcing and applying for placement(s) gives students the opportunity to experience a competitive job application process.

The experience of the work placement period enables students to apply their learning in the professional work environment, to reflect upon their own personal experience of working in an applied setting, to focus on aspects of this experience that they can clearly relate to their prior learning, and to evaluate the relationships between academic skills and employers’ expectations. Students will be assessed during and at the end of this period, through a portfolio of work, which will be marked as pass/fail.

**E3. Outline Programme Structure**

Each level is made up of four modules each worth 30 credit points. Typically a student must complete 120 credits at each level. All students will be provided with the University regulations and specific additions that are sometimes required for accreditation by outside bodies (e.g. professional or statutory bodies that confer professional accreditation). Full details of each module will be provided in module descriptors and student module guides.

Students on the two-year programme (with integrated placement) must complete all modules except the final ‘capstone project’ module, by the end of TB2, and then work in their placement(s) for a maximum of 12 months. The student should confirm that their placement opportunity is available by the end of May, and the course team will confirm whether this is acceptable within two weeks. Students on placement(s) must complete a portfolio assessment which includes a reflection on how they have applied the skills they have developed during the previous year, within a professional working environment.

A comprehensive list of all possible options is provided here. The option list in any given year will be carefully constructed to ensure that the course curriculum is coherent, enabling students to achieve the programme learning outcomes via their chosen selection of modules.

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| **Level 7** | | | | |
| **Compulsory modules** | **Module code** | **Credit**  **Value** | **Level** | **Teaching Block** |
| Journalism in context: law, ethics and the industry | JO7002 | 30 | 7 | Year long |
| Practical journalism now: multimedia skills and employability | JO7016 | 60 | 7 | Year long |
| Specialisms (**one of** Journalism Specialism feature writing; broadcast journalism | JO6021  JO7006  JO7015 | 30  30  30 | 6  7  7 | Year long |
| **Either [MA only]** Dissertation | JO7010 | 60 | 7 | May to September |
| **OR** **[MA only]** Practical project | JO7009 | 60 | 7 | May to September |
| **Optional Module** | | | | |
| Professional Placement | HU7100 | 120 | 7 | TB3 (YR 1) and  TB1 & TB2  (Yr 2) |
| **Not for credit** | | | | |
| Court reporting\* | JO7005 | 0 | 7 |  |
| Shorthand | JO7004 | 0 | 7 |  |

\*Court reporting is optional for those students choosing the Broadcast Journalism option

Students exiting the programme with 60 credits are eligible for the award of PgCert in Journalism.

Students exiting the programme with 120 credits are eligible for the award of PgDip in Journalism.

1. **Principles of Teaching Learning and Assessment**

This field has been designed to take account of the KU Curriculum Design Principles. Teaching and learning strategies and methods have been designed to introduce students to a range of skills, issues and debates in the journalism industry detailed in the learning outcomes of each module. Typically, early sessions in some modules will use lectures to provide an overview of the material, with seminars allowing students to explore and discuss the elements introduced in the lecture in more detail. Practical workshops in other modules provide hands-on experience of producing work to industry standard, supported with formative feedback by module tutors. Later sessions allow students to build on the foundations of the earlier sessions and develop their own personal interests and strengths. Students are given formative feed-forward on their practical and academic work at regular intervals so that they can improve their writing, wider journalistic practice and understanding of the material in all modules.

Assessments are designed to allow students to demonstrate both the practical skills required by employers in the journalism industry and the critical engagement necessary to reflect intellectually on their practice and that of the profession as a whole, and to operate as an effective, adaptable journalist in a fast-changing sector. A range of assessment methods is adopted, including: portfolios of journalistic work; case studies; essays; group and individual presentations; group blogs and one-to-one vivas on performance. This last encourages students to reflect on their overall performance and contribution to team work throughout the year. Assessments are set at regular intervals throughout the year and students have plenty of opportunity to receive formative feedback on their written work and oral presentations as the work is produced in class.

At the end of the year, students are able to develop their own research and professional interests through a substantial project, supported by their personal supervisor. They can choose to produce either a dissertation or a practical work-based project, which can be completed as they start their first journalism jobs. They are helped by their supervisor to devise an appropriate programme of research, in conjunction with the student’s personal tutor who has an overall understanding of all students’ strengths and interests.

**G. Support for Students and their Learning**

Students are supported by:

* A Module Leader for each module
* A Course Leader to help students understand the programme structure
* Personal Tutors to provide academic and personal support
* A placement tutor to give general advice on placements
* Technical support to advise students on IT and the use of software
* A designated Course Administrator
* An induction week at the beginning of each new academic session
* Staff Student Consultative Committee
* VLE/Canvas – a versatile online interactive intranet and learning environment accessible both on and off-site
* LinkedIn Learning – an online platform offering self-paced software tutorials
* An Academic Success Centre that provides academic skills support for both UG and PG students
* Student support facilities that provide advice on issues such as finance, regulations, legal matters, accommodation, international student support etc.
* A Student Achievement Officer who provides pastoral support
* Support for students with disabilities
* The Union of Kingston Students
* Careers and Employability Service
* Careers and Employability Services Team – will provide support for students prior to undertaking work placement(s).

The journalism department has experience of supporting students from a wide range of professional and educational backgrounds. Many of the students on the MA Journalism course are mature students coming back to study after some years in the workplace and tutors welcome the opportunity of working with such students and building on their professional skills to help them develop a new career path.

**H. Ensuring and Enhancing the Quality of the Course**

The University has several methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of its provision. These include:

* External Examiners
* Boards of Study with student representation
* Annual Monitoring and Enhancement
* Periodic review undertaken at subject level
* Student evaluation including MEQs (module evaluation questionnaires), Level Surveys and the NSS (National Student Survey)
* Moderation policies
* Feedback from employers
* NCTJ student council representative

**I. Employability Statement**

The course has been designed to satisfy the requirements of the industry’s main accreditation body, the National Council for the Training of Journalists and is an accredited NCTJ course. Students graduating from this course are therefore well placed to pursue careers in a range of journalism and communications industries. The course provides the skills base necessary for careers in:

* Local, regional and national newspapers, magazines and broadcasters
* Online news operations
* Communications departments in private sector companies
* Information departments of charities and non-governmental organisations
* Related industries such as publishing, public relations and advertising
* Advocacy and campaigning.

Since the MA Journalism course was launched in 2007, the majority of graduates from the course have gone onto jobs in journalism and related industries such as marketing and public relations. In 2018-2019, the latest year for which the department has full figures available, 100% either went straight into jobs in journalism or a related field or into further study at higher education level.

Over the past decade, the department has established a substantial network of employer contacts, including local papers such as the *Surrey Comet* and the *Kingston Guardian*; national papers and websites such as the *Independent* and *Independent on Sunday*; *Times Online*; the *Daily Telegraph*; the *Financial Times*; *Daily Express*; a wide range of new media companies; campaigning and investigative groups and non-government organisations (NGOs); and public relations (PR) firms. There is also a growing body of Kingston alumni now working in senior positions in the journalism industry, who turn to Kingston first when seeking new employees.

The emphasis on the acquisition and consolidation of practical skills on the MA course, as set out in detail in above sections, provides graduates with the ever wider range of skills and knowledge required by employers.

The two-year integrated work placement programme is designed to provide students with enhanced opportunities for securing professional employment at the end of their degree, providing skills and experience that employers are looking for in their work force. These are supported by the Careers and Employability Services team, providing drop-in and scheduled events to support students in the preparation of CVs, applications, and preparation for interviews and assessment centres.

**J. Approved Variants from the Postgraduate Regulations**

N/A

**K. Other sources of information that you may wish to consult**

For information about the NCTJ Diploma, visit [www.nctj.com](http://www.nctj.com/)

**Development of Programme Learning Outcomes in Modules**

This map identifies where the field/course learning outcomes are **summatively** assessed across the modules for this field/course. It provides an aid to academic staff in understanding how individual modules contribute to the field/course aims, a means to help students monitor their own learning, personal and professional development as the field/course progresses and a checklist for quality assurance purposes.

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| **Module Code** |  | JO7002 | JO7016 | JO6021 | JO7006 | JO7015 | JO7010 | JO7009 | HU7100 |
| **Knowledge & Understanding** | A1 | S | S | S | s | S |  | S |  |
| A2 |  | S | S | S | S |  |  |  |
| A3 | S | S |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| A4 | S | S |  |  | S |  |  |  |
| **Intellectual Skills** | B1 |  |  | S | S | S |  |  |  |
| B2 |  | S | S | S | S |  |  |  |
| B3 | S | S |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| B4 | S | S | S | S | S | S | S |  |
| B5 |  |  |  |  |  | S |  |  |
| B6 |  |  |  |  |  |  | S |  |
| **Practical Skills** | C1 | S | S | S | S | S |  |  |  |
| C2 |  | S | S | S |  |  |  |  |
| C3 | S | S | S | S | S |  |  |  |
| C4 |  | S | S | S | S |  |  |  |
| C5 |  |  |  |  |  | S |  |  |
| C6 |  |  |  |  |  |  | S |  |
|  | C7 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | S |

**Students will be provided with formative assessment opportunities throughout the course to practise and develop their proficiency in the range of assessment methods utilised.**

**Technical Annex**

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| **Final Award(s):** | PgDip/MA Journalism  Students are able to register for the nine-month PgDip award or the 12-month MA before they start their course, or can decide to switch from one to the other by the end of the first teaching-block. |
| **Intermediate Award(s):** | PgCert |
| **Minimum period of registration:** | 1 year full-time, 2 years full-time (with Professional Placement); 2 years part-time |
| **Maximum period of registration:** | 2 years full-time, 3 years full-time (with Professional Placement); 4 years part-time |
| **FHEQ Level for the Final Award:** | Masters |
| **QAA Subject Benchmark:** | N/A |
| **Modes of Delivery:** | Full-time; Part-time and ‘With Professional Placement’ |
| **Language of Delivery:** | English |
| **Faculty:** | Kingston School of Art |
| **School:** | Arts, Culture and Communication |
| **Department:** | Journalism, Publishing and Media |
| **Course/Route Code:** | PFJOU1JOU03 (full-time)  PPJOU1JOU02 (part-time)  PFJOU1JOU99 (with Professional Placement) |
|  |  |