



National Council for the Training of Journalists

Case studies from centres to explain how the teaching of ethics is integrated into NCTJ-accredited courses

Adam Smith College

Pat Joyce, course leader

The practice of ethical journalism is at the core of the NCTJ-accredited HND in practical journalism at Adam Smith College.

There is a core unit in Social and Ethical Issues for Journalists which students must pass. This unit demands that the students not only reflect and comment on ethical practice but pass a written exam testing their knowledge of appropriate codes of practice through application in industry based case studies.

Ethics also form a central part of the three units in Scots Law for Journalists, which again are core units.

In addition to this and equally, if not more, important, is the embedding of ethical practice throughout the entirety of the two year programme. As indicated by the title and its accreditation by the NCTJ is the practical nature of the award. Students within a very short time are engaged in real journalism and as such are immediately presented with issues of ethics and professional behaviour. As such they are immediately introduced to the NUJ and Editors' Codes of Practice and are expected to follow these in all their work.

All assignments are assessed in terms of adherence to these codes and students are required to log all activities carried out in gaining information, carrying out interviews, acknowledging sources etc in order to provide a "trail of probity".

Failure to adhere to appropriate codes will lead to failure of the assessment and in certain cases college disciplinary action.

At Adam Smith we take the issue of ethical practice extremely seriously and operate to create a work environment where this is the norm and students are constantly urged to operate in a reflective manner in order to maintain professional standards.

Belfast Metropolitan College

Maurice Neill, course co-ordinator

The teaching of ethics is integrated into every module of the BMC course. In reporting students are acquainted with Kovach and Rosentsteil's Elements of Journalism and the PCC code. Local case studies are discussed in an effort to illustrate the complexity of the issues including The Sunday World's front page picture of the suicide victim hanging from the bridge.

In media law the tutor places emphasis upon human rights issues and the role of the journalist in presenting fair and balanced arguments. Students are given examples of what is legally acceptable but may not be morally or commercially desirable. In 2010 students were

tasked to research and make a submission on the reporting of suicide to the Irish Press Complaints Council.

In public affairs students are required to explore the relationship between the political classes and the journalist using local case studies to illustrate the issues, for example, the BBC's exposure of Iris Robinson's affair with a young man and her financial dealings on his behalf.

In shorthand students are required to discuss the concepts of 'off the record' and 'off the record but unattributable' and 'not for publication'.

Bournemouth University

Karen Fowler-Watt, associate dean, journalism and communication, The Media School

At Bournemouth University, the NCTJ-accredited BA (Hons) Multi Media Journalism course teaches ethics as a separate unit from the 'black letter' law and regulation unit. The Journalism Ethics unit looks at the unprecedented new ethical challenges facing journalists and those they work with closely, such as advertising executives, press officers, and industry regulators.

It looks at issues such as privacy, the use of deception, and immoral conduct and press freedom.

These issues are examined with the use of contemporary case studies such as the phone hacking scandal, Wikileaks, the use of secret filming to gather evidence, and distorting digital images.

It comes bang up-to-date looking at the impact of the Leveson Inquiry.

The course also examines how moral reasoning can be used to find possible solutions to complex issues. Among the philosophers considered are Aristotle, Kant, and J S Mill.

Other issues studied include:

- Are ethical distinctions between journalism, PR, and advertising becoming dangerously blurred?
- Does the internet erode the liberty of individuals?
- Are journalists, advertisers, PROs behaving ethically online?
- How do media professionals operate globally, without censoring content, while respecting regional morals?
- Have ethical boundaries been blurred by increasingly graphic content available online?

Brunel University

Professor Sarah Niblock, head of journalism

At Brunel, Sarah Niblock delivers a range of modules on news writing, reporting and also supervises undergraduate and masters level projects and PhDs. She describes one scenario in relation to her delivery of news writing and reporting to help prepare students for their NCTJ reporting examination:

One of our most important tasks is to prepare students to work in local and regional contexts as that is where so many new entrants begin their careers. The NCTJ Reporting exam is the ideal foundation for the teaching of sensitive, ethical reporting techniques as, in Q2, it frequently presents a scenario involving a traumatic incident. Exam candidates are required to draft a list of interviewees and appropriate questions, and it has been clear to me that most scenarios will require students to demonstrate a sensitive and thoughtful approach to the interviewing of victims or their close relatives. I prepare students carefully for this task – one they will more than likely have to undertake early in their careers. Early in the programme, we discuss how the role of local or regional journalists may differ from that of national reporters. One of the key conclusions we always come to is that local reporters often live in their beat; they are part of the community they write about and have a responsibility towards their sources and subjects as well as to the wider community. I discuss my own experiences as a reporter in Liverpool who covered the Hillsborough disaster aftermath, and the abduction and killing of James Bulger and the subsequent trial of two little boys. I was reporting about and within a community suffering acutely. On a pragmatic level, I then work with students on interviewing techniques and how to approach sources with due respect and sensitivity in full accordance with the relevant regulatory codes, but also with the mindfulness of a responsible, accountable journalist. Indeed accountability underlies so much of what we do at Brunel. Our aim is to develop critical practitioners who are able to navigate a very pressured and dynamic professional context with creativity and thoughtfulness and to be future leaders. In each of our skill-based modules, students are required to submit a reflexive report in which they must account for their editorial judgements on ethical and legal grounds and discuss what they have learned and will apply to their next assignment.

Cardiff University

Professor Richard Tait, director, Cardiff University School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies

Cardiff is one of the oldest established journalism schools in the UK and the only one located in a Russell Group university. Its postgraduate diploma is a well-regarded vocational course for students wishing to make a career in journalism. Virtually all the students go on to successful careers in the media industry. The students choose one of three options – newspaper, magazine or broadcast. The newspaper option is accredited by the NCTJ and the students take NCTJ examinations as well as university examinations at the end of their year. The teaching of media law, ethics and good professional practice has always been a central part of the postgraduate course at Cardiff. Our approach covers all three elements in detail.

Media law is covered in a two semester module which deals with defamation, privacy, regulation and the courts. Students also learn the ethical and practical implications of the legal and regulatory framework within which they work. The course tutors, Professor Duncan Bloy and Ms Sara Hadwin, are the authors of a standard textbook, “Law and the Media “. The students have a course work project and a university law examination at the end of their course and are also prepared for their NCTJ law examinations in basic media law and in court reporting.

Ethics are also covered by another two semester module, Reporters & The Reported, which deals with issues of ethics and professional standards through a series of lectures with Cardiff professors and senior editors. The module is led by Professor Richard Tait, former editor-in-chief of ITN and former chairman of the BBC Trust’s editorial standards committee. The sessions cover case studies such as the current phone hacking scandal, the Hutton

Inquiry, the Phillis review, privacy and FOI. The students are examined by a piece of project work.

Good professional practice is also instilled in the students through intensive production work. The newspaper option runs bi-weekly Production Days in the second semester, producing a newspaper and lifestyle supplement to rival the local evening paper, The South Wales Echo. Each paper produced undergoes a rigorous critique at the end of the day and topical ethical issues are discussed as they arise. The course director, David English, is a former editorial training manager for Thomson Regional Newspapers. In addition, experienced journalists regularly attend production days and lecture the students on ethical and professional standards.

City of Wolverhampton College

Sue Green, head of journalism

NCTJ students at City of Wolverhampton College are told from the start that ethics are not a bolt-on extra topic or subject area to study, but are integral to every aspect of a job in journalism and therefore integral to every part of the programme of study.

This professional training for young reporters plays a vital role in emphasising that ethical practice is precisely good journalism which begins with learning the core skills of competent and accurate reporting.

The study of media law is a key area in which the boundaries of practice and behaviour can be established, providing opportunity to ensure that students thoroughly examine the Code of Practice and self regulation of the media industry and apply it to 'real life' stories. The NCTJ Law Board enforces this study with questions to be examined in both Essential Media Law and Court Reporting exams. For instance, most students would understand there was no automatic anonymity for a young person appearing as a witness or victim in an adult court. But the question tests knowledge on sexual cases where - even if the law permits - a young person involved in the proceedings could not be identified under the industry codes.

Accountability and responsibility is also promoted to encourage good journalism with local newsroom experience. It is here that students learn by peer example, showing a real passion for their work and their desires, attitudes and responses to think through ethical dilemmas faced by working journalists.

Cornwall College

Mark Benattar, head of journalism

We have removed the specific ethics module from the timetable as it was too restrictive and we now teach ethics as part of general reporting. We have two annual guest lectures from the PCC as well as by mindout for mental health, when journalists who have suffered from schizophrenia etc come and talk about press coverage. Lectures include ethical case studies such as reporting suicide etc. We also look at race, gender, class, ownership and bias in the media – this includes looking at historical bias in the press from Palestine to the miners.

De Montfort University

Ali Haynes, journalism subject leader

Ethics, like law, shorthand and every other journalistic skill and competence cannot exist in isolation, but form an integral part of professional practice; a core aspect of doing the job of journalism.

That's the view of the journalism teaching team at De Montfort University where examination of ethical issues and moral dilemmas are an embedded part of day-to-day teaching and learning, just as they form part of the everyday challenges facing every working journalist.

This means, for example, that in a law class students will consider not only what the letter of the law or PCC code says, but what a spectrum of practitioners consider acceptable and appropriate practice; when we should be pushing the boundaries of the law and when we should be erring very much on the side of caution and consideration for those about whom we write.

Our approach applies at all levels, on undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Students are strongly encouraged to become reflective practitioners, considering not only their own practice, but looking at news from many sources and platforms every day and examining the various challenges journalists would have faced, in producing those items. Ethical considerations, of course, comprise a significant part of that discussion and debate. In common with many universities, there is substantial focus on ethical matters as part of theoretical modules. The fact that many students choose to take this study further via their choice of undergraduate and postgraduate dissertations, is perhaps testament to the success of student engagement with ethical deliberation in this sphere.

But as well as the day to day integration of ethics outlined above, we also attach substantial weight to such matters in practical journalism modules.

An example of this can be seen in the third year (undergraduate) Practical Journalism module. Here, a significant part (20%) of the module is devoted to ethics and morals. This is underpinned in several ways, including:

- A 2,000 word essay on a topic of the student's choice; group work analysing and presenting their findings on a number of themes which have recently included News International phone-hacking and editorial judgement surrounding the McCann case;
- Looking at examples of real dilemmas and sensitive situations such as death knocks, court cases and particularly difficult inquests
- Students are asked to reflect upon how they, or others, might behave in the pursuit of a story.
- We consider why the spotlight on journalism ethics is shining so brightly at the moment and discuss whether journalists are any less ethical than they were in the past – again, all illustrated with lots of contemporary examples.

All of this teaching is led by qualified journalists who have a wealth of real-life experience in being embroiled in such situations first-hand; supported by a range of visiting speakers who help to bring this potentially problematic subject to life.

Glasgow Caledonian University

Julian Calvert, course leader

The teaching of media-related ethics is integral to both our undergraduate and postgraduate multimedia journalism programmes at Glasgow Caledonian University. Since our aim is for graduates to be reflective practitioners, ethical issues are central to all practical journalism modules, as they stress the importance of truth, accuracy and objectivity, while professional codes of practice including the PCC code and OFCOM guidelines are integrated into the teaching of reporting, as well as being covered in other modules such as law. Several journalism modules use reflective blogs as part of the assessment, so that students have to see their own work (and experiences on placements) in a wider professional and ethical context. The most recent and obvious example is that undergraduates were running a newsday on the day that Colonel Gaddafi was killed, so I led a discussion on how to handle publication of photographs – an issue which proved very controversial over the following few days.

Two particular modules concentrate on ethical dilemmas faced by working journalists – Journalism in Context for the MA, and Media Ethics for the BA; these are both led by Dr Douglas Chalmers who is one of the university's leading innovators in new approaches to teaching. He uses blogs and wikis with the aim of encouraging interaction between students and with their lecturer/ tutor outside face-to-face teaching hours. This has also proved effective in helping students take ownership of their own learning, and encourage reflective and iterative learning.

In both programmes a general discussion of ethics and its relevance for communications is given, dealing with *what is ethics*, and specifically what might be called 'media ethics'. This deals in general with the concept of moral decision-making and why in the field of the media it has to underpin conduct. A comparison is then made between the libertarian theories and social responsibility theories of the press, and the implications that each would have for practice. Students are then introduced to five general approaches to ethics – Egoism, non-consequentialism (a Kantian approach), consequential theories (utilitarianism, the ideas of John Stuart Mill), virtue ethics (the ideas of Aristotle), and finally the 'Ethics of Care' (feminist ethics, the work of writers such as Carol Gilligan).

As the course proceeds, students are introduced to increasingly difficult 'dilemmas' which they have to confront through the use of a class blog, explaining the ethical approaches they think best to adopt in each case.

Two typical examples are:

- The case of the 'council official' discovered stealing, who in return for non-reporting, will give the reporter details of 'major crime' at the top of the council
- The case of the 'people's candidate' who seems ready to sweep the board, in a former authoritarian country, but who you discover has committed adultery while presenting his family life as 'perfect' to the media

We also look at real life scenarios – such as the case of Northern Ireland former reporter Nick Martin-Clarke, who testified for the prosecution against a loyalist terrorist, who had given him information, under the aegis of confidentiality.

The ethics of photojournalism are also covered – we examine the ethics surrounding the publications of two award winning photos – the voluntary self-immolation of the Buddhist monk Thich Quang Duc, captured by Malcolm W Browne in Saigon in 1963 as a protest

against Government policies, and Kevin Carter's Pulitzer Prize winning picture of the young girl being menaced by an awaiting vulture, during the 1994 Sudan Famine. Other case studies are introduced as topics arise – over the last two years we have dealt with the ethics of Wikileaks and also the phone hacking scandal at News International. Following the taught element of the course, students are asked to consider issues that may have arisen and which involved themselves or work colleagues while they were on work placement during their studies. They are asked to do a presentation of this to the class, and discuss ethical issues which may have arisen at the time, and which they now view with the benefit of their ethical understanding. The report of their presentation, and the discussion thereof, then becomes part of the assessment overall.

Glyndwr University

Janet Jones, senior lecturer in journalism

At Glyndwr University in Wrexham, our NCTJ-accredited journalism course is run in partnership with a regional newspaper group. The university week is split between two days of lectures and two days of work experience in a working newsroom guided by senior journalists at NWN Media.

It means that, across the board, our journalism students get an integrated grounding in all aspects of local newspaper reporting. It also gives them the chance to experience first-hand the daily decisions journalists make on the ethical issues of their news gathering.

Our media law and ethics programme follows the NCTJ's programme of study which includes considerable detail on privacy and the various codes of conduct and editorial guidelines in both print and broadcast. Part of the teaching includes using recent cases from the PCC and Ofcom which students work through to make their own decisions using the relevant codes before discussing the actual adjudication.

They use the most recent court cases and judgements on issues such as privacy, harassment, juveniles and sexual offences to ensure they have up-to-date knowledge. And lecturers, who are all working journalists, create realistic scenarios for students to work through, testing the application of their understanding of both the law and the codes of conduct. We use dynamic material in class reflecting current issues in journalism and breaking news stories. A recent session on the use of images asked students to compare front page coverage of the death of Colonel Gaddafi and discuss ethical issues.

This is complemented by continual links with the students' experience in the newsroom dealing with real-life stories and the ethical issues they produce. It means that students often face the reality of ethical decisions made by senior reporters by seeing how information is gathered, how stories are written and which stories may be dropped or amended for ethical considerations. It gives them regular contact with senior journalists and the opportunity to discuss ethical issues as they arise.

The partnership with the newspaper group also provides an opportunity for working journalists to come to the university to talk to students directly about the principles and practices of newspaper reporting.

For example, one senior journalist spent the afternoon with students recently discussing both the practical and ethical issues surrounding interviewing a recently bereaved individual or family.

NWN Media's philosophy is that its local newspapers have a duty to uphold the highest standards of journalism in serving the local community. The company also recognises that the newspaper that fails to pay due regard to ethical standards and practices would soon fall foul of its readers and quickly lose its reputation and the trust of its readers. This philosophy is communicated to our students as part of our joined-up approach giving our students a real insight into the daily ethical issues of news gathering and how to deal with them.

Harlow College

Sue Barr, assistant academy manager, journalism

We embed the teaching of ethics across all NCTJ modules. It is delivered by way of lecture, class discussion, formal debate and through the daily practice of journalism as we upload stories to our web site, the Harlow Harrier. Visiting speakers have tackled such issues as the ethics of covering the activities of the BNP and how to use Twitter and other social media platforms in an ethical way to both source and disseminate news stories.

As regards to the specific teaching of Essential Media Law, significant parts of the syllabus deal with ethical considerations for trainee journalists. For example, *Protection of privacy in the law*. The privacy protection in the first paragraph of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights and that a key criterion when a court considers a claim that privacy has been or will be breached is whether there is a reasonable expectation of privacy in the relevant circumstances (*McNae*, pp. 402-403, 405, 566). Examples of recent cases in which judges have upheld, in civil law, privacy rights against the media, in particular the cases concerning Princess Caroline of Monaco [Von Hannover versus Germany], Naomi Campbell v Mirror Group Newspapers, and Mosley v News Group Newspapers (*McNae*, pp. 386, 401, 544).

The law course also includes the teaching of the protection of privacy, as set out in the PCC code, including public interest exceptions. It also teaches *Avoidance of intrusion into grief, shock, suffering or distress*, as expressed in Clause 5.1 of the PCC Codes.

The course also stresses *Provision for protection of children's privacy and welfare in ethical codes* as expressed in Clause 6 of the PCC codes.

Other ethical considerations which are taught are:

- ❖ *That if a person or organisation makes clear that no comment will be offered, journalists should not persist in seeking comment unless persistence is justified/warranted*, as expressed in Clause 4 of the PCC codes
- ❖ *That covert filming or covert audio-recording needs particular justification to be ethical*, as expressed in Clause 10 of the PCC codes
- ❖ *That deception, subterfuge or misrepresentation by journalists needs particular justification to be ethical*, as expressed in Clause 10 of the PCC codes including the public interest exceptions.

The NCTJ law examinations include questions which cover the above ethical considerations. Reporting and Multi-Platform Portfolio classes are regularly the forum for debates - both formal and informal - on ethical issues of the day; a recent topic has obviously been the phone hacking scandal, with teachers emphasising both the illegality and unethical nature of such covert activities. (A member of staff who once witnessed phone hacking while working on a national newspaper has incorporated some cautionary material about this into his lessons.)

Reporting classes cover all elements of the PCC Code of Conduct including the fundamental need for accuracy (Article 1) the right to reply (Article 2) and respect for privacy (Article 3). Students are taught how to obtain information via interview and other research methods without harassment or misrepresentation (Articles 4 and 8). Students discuss the outcomes of PCC cases as recorded on the commission's web site and so are made aware of the results of overstepping the mark.

There is also wider discussion about the ethics of posting personal details, for example, on social networking sites, the responsible use of reader forums and feedback, and how to spot unreliable sources on the Web.

In the article headed "Court Proposals Draw Criticism" on www.harlowharrier.co.uk, one of our students examines some of the ethical issues raised by the government's proposals to introduce cameras into the courtroom.

Classes in Essential Public Affairs encompass a range of ethical issues, from the proper use of the Freedom of Information Act to the correct reporting of council finances, and the use of ombudsmen, as well as questions surrounding public funding of the Civil List and the role of backbench committees in investigating the activities of the media and other sectors.

Production Journalism focuses heavily on the need for accuracy, including headlines that do not mislead and are legally and ethically sound. Business of Magazines features discussion about ethics in advertising and sport and Videojournalism look at many of the same issues as Reporting.

Highbury College

Lorraine Proudlock, programme manager

All students are given a copy of the editors' code of conduct during the first week of our fast-track course and it's integrated into all our teaching modules.

I present students with a number of scenarios which they may face as trainee reporters. The students work in pairs or small groups, discussing how they would handle each scenario.

Students then feedback their findings to the rest of the group, receiving guidance where necessary from the tutor.

Examples of the scenarios include:

- How much detail they would include in a report from an inquest.
- How to deal with requests not to publish certain information.
- How to deal with complaints from readers.
- How to deal with the police.

Lambeth College

Roz Mckenzie, course leader

Ethics are embedded in the law and journalism modules (PCC and Ofcom codes) as well as separate tutorial workshops throughout the course.

Tutorials

In week two, there is a workshop on journalists' problems where the following questions are debated in small groups.

Doubtful ways of obtaining information:

1. Should you always state at the outset that you are a reporter? Is it ever permissible not to?
2. Your rival carries a quote from someone you have been trying to contact. Should you lift it?
3. If a child opens the door or answers the phone and no adult is available, should you try and get information from the child?
4. Is it permissible to know more than you do? Is it acceptable to make initial inquiries about some other subject before coming to the really contentious issue?
5. If your interviewee is not talkative, is it permissible to ask long questions inviting yes and no answers and use your own questions as a quote?
6. Is it ever permissible to ring people in the middle of the night?
7. If a story has been off-the-record what can you do to get the story?
8. Is it ever okay to interview someone who has just been bereaved?

When people lean on you:

1. What do you do if someone rings you up and demands a correction and apology?
2. What do you do when someone tries to stop you reporting something? For example, offers a bribe, pleads hardship, says they're friends of the editor.

In week 8, students study recent PCC adjudications. They are given a real life case and then are asked to debate if the PCC upheld the complaint or not. Again, the issues relating to the code are debated. The exercise we use is the same as one recently used by the PCC in national newspaper newsrooms.

Media Law

Most aspects of the PCC and Ofcom codes are covered in the media law sessions, in particular the ethical code relating to children, reporting sex cases, clandestine listening devices, privacy and the public interest.

Journalism

Ethics underpin all aspects of this module – from the emphasis on accurate reporting to responsible news gathering techniques, the use of contacts etc.

Leeds Trinity University College

Catherine O'Connor, head of journalism and business

Ethical practice is at the heart of teaching journalism at Leeds Trinity, including on our NCTJ-accredited post graduate newspaper and magazine courses.

Our post graduate accredited programmes include a module called Law, Ethics and Regulation (our undergraduate programmes also include similar content), but we believe that ethical practice is too important to be confined to a niche on the timetable.

If journalists are doing their job conscientiously and thoroughly, then ethical considerations must apply at every stage; story selection, choosing and contacting interviewees, conducting

interviews and fact-checking, editing and condensing material, as well as the final presentation – including the use of headlines, selection of images and the overall context in which the piece is framed. Our role is to ensure that students are fully conversant with this.

The understanding of journalistic practices which are safe, transparent, within legal and regulatory guidelines, and which focus on audience impact and relationships, is not simply a theoretical exercise. Rather, it must be an applied process which is inherent in all news sourcing, gathering and reporting and students must be able to put what they have learned into practice in realistic situations.

This means that ethical practice cannot be taught in the isolation of the classroom - it must be linked to real-world experiences, born out of the strong industry links and vocational ethos fostered by accredited courses and nurtured by the practitioners who teach core skills and encourage thoughtful and reflective decision making. This process is enhanced through links with outside organisations, including the emergency and armed services and local authorities, which allow students to hone their skills.

The building blocks of ethical theory are also supported by simulated classroom exercises (based on real-world scenarios) and evidenced in our live news output, which allows students to demonstrate their skills in the real world in real time.

Institutions like Leeds Trinity support the development of sound ethical practice in the following ways:

- By providing students with a clear framework for good practice, which is informed by an understanding of appropriate regulatory codes and guidelines
- Placing a strong emphasis on the importance of accuracy and ensuring that students understand the consequences of getting things wrong (for example, inaccuracy in the NCTJ Reporting exam will lead to them failing)
- Making sure students know how to source information without breaching professional codes, breaking the law or losing trust with their audience.
- Ensuring our students and trainee journalists understand the role of journalism in society in terms of relaying facts, uncovering the truth and informing audiences in an engaging manner to support discussion, openness and democratic citizenship
- Encouraging reflective practice and decision making, whereby students build on what is done well and learn from any mistakes made, both in terms of their own practice and in terms of wider industry issues.

Press Association Training

Tony Johnston, head of PA Training

Press Association Training provides a wide range of editorial training services to clients including Trinity Mirror plc, the Daily Mail, the Telegraph and News International.

We are part of the Press Association, the national news agency for the UK and Ireland.

Our NCTJ-accredited foundation courses in multimedia journalism provide entry-level vocational training to aspiring news reporters. The 17-week programme has been the starting point for the careers of many of the country's leading journalists.

The teaching of high ethical standards, particularly the adherence to the Press Complaints Commission Code of Practice, is a key element of the course.

Trainees are issued with the Code on the first day of the course. Its requirements on accuracy, harassment, intrusion into grief and shock, the reporting of crime, hospitals and reporting on issues relating to children, form content for early session on news gathering.

A representative of the PCC attends each course to deliver formal training on its role and this is followed by a further workshop in which trainees are challenged to consider cases previously referred to the PCC.

Working as panels, they make judgements on the claims and these are then compared to the actual findings of the Commission. This helps embed their detailed understanding of the interpretation of the code.

The NCTJ's media law syllabus also requires a thorough understanding of the code and this is covered during the delivery of the law course.

Aside from these formal sessions, the guidance provided by the code underpins every aspect of subjects taught on the course.

Trainees spend time working on real stories for consideration for publication in newspapers and on websites produced by Trinity Mirror, Northcliffe, Newsquest and Tindle Newspapers as an integral part of the course.

During these activities, trainee reporters are able to see the significance of the code in action and any issues raised are reviewed with course tutors both formally and informally.

The responsibilities placed on reporters to adhere to the requirements of self regulation are taken extremely seriously by all our tutors. When they begin work they not only have a thorough understanding of the code of conduct but also a detailed knowledge of how it is interpreted.

This ensures they can make the right decisions if they encounter situations out in the field where choices have to be made on what is and what is not acceptable practice for a reporter.

As well as the work we do on our foundation courses, the Press Association also provides training in legal and ethical issues to journalists across the major publishing groups, including Trinity Mirror, Associated Newspapers, Telegraph Media Group and many more.

These courses are run not only for new entrants into the industry but are also provided as programmes of continual professional development for journalists throughout their careers.

The internal examination service we provide to Trinity Mirror includes specific written and oral questioning about ethical compliance within the boundaries established by the PCC code.

Robert Gordon University

Andrew Jones, head of journalism

We aim to incorporate the teaching of media ethics across all of our modules on our NCTJ-accredited programme. This combines theory, case studies and practical experience.

The learning outcomes are strengthened by a range of external speakers and our own professional experience. We expect to welcome Alison Hastings from the PCC in early December.

All our students are expected to complete at least one week of professional work placement prior to entry. It provides an important opportunity to apply current practice to academic theory. The gap is sometimes alarmingly wide and provides us an excellent opportunity to explore contemporary issues.

The MSc programme is heavily focussed on the development of practical experience. Students are expected to source original material from the very first week of enrolment and challenged to confront appropriate ethical dilemmas. As they progress, our postgraduates establish dedicated “news patches” interacting with a wide range of external contributors. Our teaching aims to adopt the best practice in professional education. It is focused on NCTJ guidelines incorporating *Shorthand, Media Law, Reporting, Broadcast Journalism and Public Affairs*.

We also deliver a specific module designed to address ethical and professional issues. It has four principle aims: critically examining the role of news values in a multimedia environment; exploring the constraints that apply to newsgathering; differentiating between fact, theory and opinion; and critically evaluating contemporary media issues and their impact on journalistic practice and the application of appropriate ethical codes.

All our post graduates are required to maintain a blog during their first semester in which they review specific aspects of the media practice. We also expect our students to bring news stories to a weekly tutorial in which we explore their ethical challenges.

Staffordshire University

Sarah Rowlands, head of journalism

Staffordshire University runs two NCTJ accredited course. The three year undergraduate single honours Journalism degree and the MA Journalism programme. Ethics is not taught on its own in a single module, ethics is woven into all of our modules. In the first year of the undergraduate degree ethics is embedded in the core modules such as Thinking Journalism, Media Law and Theory and Practice. Students analyse and reflect on their practice, outlining and discussing ethical considerations and issues encountered during practical journalism work. All feedback sessions on practical modules discuss ethics. We use StaffsLive, a live news website for our journalism students to publish their stories online. This gives the students the opportunity to encounter professional discussions concerning news ethics firsthand. We had an example just this week regarding a student’s story about the local hospital and whether it was ethically/morally right for us to pull the story from StaffsLive. These are daily discussions that take place between students and staff.

St Marys University College, Twickenham

Daragh Minogue, academy director

Ethics in journalism is probably covered in some shape or form on every module we teach (except shorthand). For example, during one of our recent editorial meetings for the online magazine the students discussed appropriate and inappropriate language to use in stories about the Paralympics. In addition to the NCTJ curriculum, which includes the modules in

Media Law and Court Reporting, we run a module entitled Critical Issues in Journalism, which is the kind of module I know many NCTJ courses offer, especially in HE.

This module is dominated by ethical concerns. We cover the full range of topics one would expect on such a module, using classic as well as contemporary case studies, so it includes quite a bit of history. I also use case studies from Britain, Ireland and the US. It begins with a screening of All the President's Men and a discussion on the essential principals of journalism.

Some of our main topics and case studies this year will include:

- Truth and accuracy: Hillsborough and 'the truth'
- Public interest: privacy, Ryan Giggs and other super injunctions
- Accountability and regulation: Leveson Inquiry
- Impartiality: Rangers v Celtic and other examples of reporting from divided communities
- Independence: The role of PR in sports journalism
- Trust: 1. Photojournalism 2. The reputation of the local paper 3. The BBC
- Sources: 1. Deep throat and other anonymous sources 2. Andrew Gilligan and David Kelly 3. Twitter

This year, we are also including guest speakers on interviewing celebrities, sports broadcasting, phone hacking (by a criminologist, rather than a journalist) and a trip to the Leveson Inquiry.

Teesside University

Paul Bailey, senior lecturer

MA Journalism / MA Module: Law, Ethics and Freedom of Information

The NCTJ Law syllabus sits within this module and students learn everything that is needed for them to work as professional journalists including time put aside to discuss relevant issues around the law and ethics as well.

Students are introduced to the concept of what law is and discussions take place around ethical issues and how the law relates to them.

We start by discussing academic interpretations of ethics such as Karen Sanders (Ethics and Journalism) who divides different ethical approaches into three categories:

- Deontological ethics – where the emphasis is placed on the notion of duty
- Consequentialist ethics - where the consequence of action is underlined
- Virtue ethics – where good character is emphasised

Students are also made aware of the PCC and Ofcom codes in these sessions and we go through the various sections and relate that to some ethical questions such as:

- Should journalists ever lie or use deceit in the pursuit of a story?
- Should they ever edit a direct quote?
- Is it legitimate to tape a conversation and not inform the interviewee of this?
- Which special considerations should journalists have when interviewing children?
- Is chequebook journalism justified?

- Is it legitimate to invade someone's privacy for a story?
- Is it legitimate to break an embargo?
- To what extent does newspaper language reinforce stereotypes?
- What ethical issues are raised by business sponsorship of newspaper editions?
- Should journalists accept freebies?
- Is the lobby industry justified?
- Relationship with sources: eg football managers - is the use of unattributed material legitimate? Is it fair to print or broadcast a story about someone who has been unable to comment? How to treat bereaved relatives or sources who may not be able to understand your line of questioning. Hard drug users.
- Level of publicity. Do the gruesome details of a suicide need to be spelt out? Should we be told about the sexual lives of politicians? Plumbers? School teachers? Where are the limits and who decides?

Discussions around 'the public interest' are also central and take place here. Students are made to think what is in 'the public interest' and what is simply of 'interest to the public'. Discussions use contemporaneous examples on a regular basis such as the recent phone hacking scandal and the current Leveson Inquiry and anything else currently in the media regarding the law or ethical issues.

A number of sessions are put aside to purely discuss privacy issues. Students are also taught how to make a FOI request and actually make one.

BA (Hons) Multimedia Journalism

In regards to undergraduates, ethics is taught from the first week in many different contexts. In the first year, a broad yet in depth look at democracy, cultural concepts combined with a theoretical and historical context is explored to help students understand the role of the journalist as a watchdog of the public.

As the course is that of multimedia journalism students are taught the importance of providing ethically-sourced accurate copy suitable for a number of platforms. This is supported by many visits to court; lectures from relevant guest speakers like magistrates and solicitors as well as managers in the media. They are also assessed on their ability as a blogger and using social mediums such as Twitter to keep abreast of current affairs and indeed, to source stories and contribute their views on the issues of the day.

In the subsequent second and third years students are expected to work relatively independently; interviewing a broad spectrum of people while originating copy that is ethical and safe to publish or broadcast. Students are also expected to file original copy for the university news site and corresponding newspaper T-side as means of self-editing and employing their newly learnt legal skills. All students must study for the NCTJ exams and also pass these before they are allowed to apply for work experience on our partner newspapers. This is to ensure they are legally and ethically sound and able to do the job on their first day in the newsroom.

University of Brighton

Jackie Errigo, course leader

The teaching of journalistic/professional ethics features explicitly and implicitly in the course. Most obviously, good (expected) professional practice (as currently defined by the PCC Code) is taught within a year-long module on media law and regulation. The key areas of the code are taught, considered and related to best practice. In the next academic year, this will

be extended to include key areas of the Ofcom regulations, as our teaching needs to reflect the convergent world of digital journalism as the NCTJ now requires.

Students are expected to apply this learning to the work they produce in the vocational/practice-based modules; again most of these are year-long so the expectation is that the application of understanding progresses incrementally with the student during the module.

Further good practice is also taught and expected in the vocational-type modules; parts of the PCC Code which apply to actual projects, for example, interviewing and filming children are included in the teaching. Students whose assessed work breaches either legal or ethical guidelines are penalised. This underpins the importance attached to good practice (legal and ethical) and reinforces the teaching which requires that journalistic work is produced within accepted and acceptable boundaries.

Current topics such as 'phone hacking' are not ignored but they are contextualised: viz, this is a practice limited to a limited number of media organisations; it is not widespread across all branches and levels of the media and our delivery of 'ethics' is predicated on the basis that most journalists, most of the time, expect to be asked to do their job properly and correctly.

If we move away from the narrowness of a furore created by a handful of national newspapers and consider ethics as a much broader topic that goes beyond regulatory codes; then in this sense, the teaching of ethics is implicit in many more modules in the degree programme.

If ethics can be said to include how the media represents differing sections of society (women, ethnic groups, those with disabilities, the young, the old) and how these representations might be improved, challenged, changed and more specifically for this course, how these groups are reported within the sporting context, then our teaching is extensive. Our critical and contextual modules address these issues and require students to become aware of them and thus facilitate consideration as to where their personal individual responsibility lies in relation to how they portray people. Students are expected to produce narratives that as well as abiding by the law and the codes, show respect and understanding and open-minded approaches to the reporting of those who may be in the minority.

For us, ethics is not just about obvious wrongs such as phone-hacking; it is about how work is framed and expressed and reporting on the current football race row involving John Terry and Anton Ferdinand is as important, if not more important, than what happened at News International.

University of Central Lancashire

Julie Freer, journalism division leader

Michael Williams, module leader

All third year undergraduate single honours journalism students at the University of Central Lancashire take part in module JN3025 Ethics and Regulation. The course is compulsory and comprises some 150 students each year. Students cannot graduate if they do not pass the module. Postgraduate students are also invited to the lectures and ethics is embedded in their core journalism module.

During the course of the module, which runs over 12 weeks, students will learn about the meaning of morality and the application of ethics to the gathering, reporting and publishing of news. They will also learn about the development of regulatory frameworks and codes of

conduct in print, online and broadcast. They will also consider a range of issues, including privacy, plagiarism and other moral problems that bear on the working lives of journalists. The course revolves around two key elements. A set of guest lectures given by leading figures in the industry and academic world, which have included David Leigh, investigations editor, *The Guardian*, David Hayward, of the BBC College of Journalism, Chris Blackhurst, editor of *The Independent*, Radio 4 *Thought for the Day* commentator Catherine Pepinster, Professor Chris Frost, author of the leading student textbook *Ethics*, award-winning *Panorama* journalist Andrew Jennings, David Randall, author of best-selling book *The Universal Journalist*, the chairman of the Press Complaints Commission and many others.

The second element is a series of assessed seminars where small groups of students discuss the ethics surrounding the key live issues in the news of the day, moderated by their tutors. In spring 2011, the focus was on privacy and “super-injunctions”. In spring 2012, students will undoubtedly be concentrating on the key issues surrounding the Leveson inquiry.

Grades are given according seminar assessments by the four dedicated tutors, based on students’ knowledge of media regulations and their ability to critically evaluate them, to display an understanding of how the codes work and their skills analysing complex moral problems. There is also a written examination, which accounts for 60 per cent of the total mark.

The module is led by Michael Williams, former head of news at *The Sunday Times*, deputy editor, the *Independent on Sunday* and Readers’ Editor of *The Independent*. Attendance at both lectures and seminars is mandatory and students are penalised for unauthorised absence. Based on previous years, students should expect to find the course both enjoyable and stimulating, judging by the generally high ratings given by students in their “module evaluation questionnaires”.

University of Kent

Professor Tim Luckhurst, Professor of Journalism Head of the Centre for Journalism

The promise the Centre for Journalism makes to students competing for places on our NCTJ accredited degree courses - the BA in Journalism and the News Industry and the MA in Multimedia Journalism - is expressed in our recruitment literature. This states that: “Responsible reporting requires professional multimedia journalists equipped with cutting-edge academic, vocational and ethical skills.”

We did not insert the reference to ethics after we learned that Milly Dowler’s telephone had been hacked. It was in the course description the NCTJ received from us in 2007 and it has appeared in every student recruitment pamphlet we have published since. I do not believe that it would be possible to teach the core NCTJ values of truth, accuracy and objectivity without placing special emphasis on ethical conduct.

Ethical understanding and conduct is essential if students are to succeed in the NCTJ’s examinations in Reporting, Law and Public Affairs. Such values have acquired additional significance since the NCTJ expanded its remit to include broadcast and online journalism. Our students must now be familiar with the OFCOM code and the BBC Editorial Guidelines as well as the Newspaper and periodical industry’s Code of Practice.

In order to satisfy the NCTJ’s accreditation committee that our degree programmes place sufficient emphasis on these crucial aspects of professional journalism practice and in order

to promote our own commitment to responsible reporting, we at Kent have included expanded academic teaching of ethics on both of our degree programmes.

Students on our undergraduate degree study a compulsory academic module in Freedom of Expression, Law and the Media. Postgraduate students must study a module entitled Journalism Law, Ethics and Regulation. These intensive modules include detailed and critical consideration of issues including freedom of expression, journalists' sources, privacy, intrusion and censorship.

This formal teaching is reinforced throughout our academic teaching of reporting and it is amplified in our daily editorial conferences at which attendance by students is compulsory. No student at Kent can acquire a degree without participating in numerous debates about the importance of ethical conduct and sensitivity to harm. Our guiding principles are accuracy, sincerity and hospitality. We define these as:

Accuracy — a journalist must ensure that what they say is not false.

Sincerity — a journalist must say what they actually believe

Hospitality — journalists should inform ethical debate about issues that promote dialogue with liberal and humanitarian forms of thought.

As a former editor of newspapers and BBC network news programmes, these are the values I consider central to the NCTJ's nationally regulated and assessed programmes of journalism training. They feature in every aspect of our teaching, professional and academic. They are tested in the NCTJ's professional examinations and reinforced powerfully in the academic teaching and assessment through which our students learn the principles and practice of ethical, public interest journalism.

University of Salford

Steve Panter, senior lecturer

On the NCTJ-accredited MA, I take a compulsory module, News and Ethics, which, essentially, studies ethical issues confronting working journalists in the daily news gathering/reporting process: issues from chequebook journalism through to intrusion into grief.

We study the PCC and Ofcom codes and in fact, Alison Hastings (also a BBC Trustee) is coming to talk to the MAs on 16 November.

For their compulsory ethics assignments, the MA students are required to interview members of the public who have been on the receiving end of press attention, perhaps, or journalists practising in the industry, or those in authority with a particular involvement in media practice and ethics.

For example, one student travelled to the House of Commons and interviewed John Whittingdale MP, chairman of the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee about his committee's approach to press ethics. Another went to South Wales and interviewed Madeleine Moon MP for Bridgend, about the ethics of reporting suicides and approaching bereaved families. Moon is talking to the PCC about further guidance on reporting of suicides. There were several so-called copycat suicides in her constituency.

Also, last year, I brought in the adult son of a recently convicted child murderer to be interviewed by the students about his experience of being contacted by reporters. A student

also interviewed relatives of a child, found hanged from a garden swing, about their dealings with the local press.

Each year, I bring in a media lawyer from Manchester's leading firm, Pannone, who believes the press should be regulated by statute, in the same way as broadcast.

Ethics is also at the core of the NCTJ curriculum, taught at Salford University, alongside the academic modules. For example in media law, students are also tested by the NCTJ on how the Press Complaints Commission's Editors' Code applies to the reporting, for example, of situations involving children and also victims of sexual assault.

In the teaching of the syllabus of the reporting examination set by the NCTJ, students are taught that accuracy, fairness and objectivity are absolutely essential in good news reporting and similarly, for videojournalism for online, and completion of the NCTJ portfolio, which requires students to operate as 'roving reporters', sourcing potential stories in an ethical and lawful manner, before approaching members of the public and carrying out interviews, in accordance with editorial guidelines laid down by the PCC and also Ofcom.

In summary, no journalism student graduates from the NCTJ-accredited course at Salford without a sound knowledge of his or her ethical obligations. This is particularly vital for those MA graduates on the cusp of entering the news industry. They cannot operate safely and effectively without knowing the lines they should not cross. The study of ethics for journalists is given the same priority as media law as it is on all accredited courses.

University of Sunderland

Chris Rushton, head of journalism and public relations

Alastair Robinson, BA journalism programme leader

The University of Sunderland delivers five undergraduate degrees and three postgraduate programmes leading to NCTJ qualifications. More than 350 students are currently registered on these courses.

On all our core journalism modules – practical and theoretical – students are required to consider journalism ethics. At undergraduate level, key ethical themes are pursued over the three years of our degree programmes, culminating in a 20-credit media ethics module, taken by all final year students. Journalism ethics are also embedded throughout our journalism MAs.

In practical journalism modules in first year, students are introduced to such topics as the ethics of interviewing, the selection and treatment of sources, and the distinction between fact and comment. In their first semester, they study the history of journalism, looking in particular at the relationship between press and governments and the tension between the press's commercial imperatives and its societal role. Students also look at the development of press regulation and the role of the Press Complaints Commission. Notions of privacy and public interest are considered, as are the ethical challenges of citizen journalism, and the rights and responsibilities of the press.

Such themes are developed in our journalism modules in second and third years. There is further consideration of codes of conduct, the ethics of sourcing stories through social media, the changing notion of privacy in the digital age, the importance of accurate representation, the concept of defamation, and the need for sensitivity in dealing with private grief. Media law and its relationship to the ethical behaviour required by the state, is taught to all journalism students in the second year.

In the final year, ethics are covered in depth in our dedicated module, with students across all our journalism programmes being introduced to philosophical aspects of the subject as well as focusing on practical dilemmas. Interviewing and the protection of sources are considered in the wider context of the ethics of trust. Students look at the ethics of taste and sensitivity in print, broadcast and online imagery. They examine media codes and regulation in practice, focusing on notions of subterfuge, intrusion and harassment. This year they will, of course, look in depth at Hackgate and the Leveson Inquiry. They consider the relationship between journalism and public relations, and journalism and government. They study the ethics of war reporting, with a focus on current conflicts across the globe; the ethics of inclusion, with a focus this year on the reporting of the 2011 riots; and the ethics of disclosure, with a case study of Wikileaks. In their work on political and news agendas they are taught by Professor Guy Starkey, author of *Balance and Bias in Journalism: Representation, Regulation and Democracy* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

The ethics of “freebies” and the relationship between editorial, advertising and PR are considered in various contexts in our fashion, sport and magazine modules across three years. They are given particular focus in our 20-credit arts, entertainment and games module in final year, which looks in depth at the ethics of reviewing.

A key element of our final-year ethics work is a scrutiny of what it means to be a journalist. Our students look at the notion of the “good” journalist and are encouraged to act in an ethical way in their working lives.

University of Ulster

Maggie Swarbrick, course director

The MA in journalism is a yearlong course for post graduate students. It combines practice-led teaching, incorporating the NCTJ curriculum, with academic, theoretical modules, and dissertation. The course team considers the incorporation of editorial and ethical issues to be of the utmost importance. Students should be able to spot editorial dilemmas and be able to address them in a thoughtful and logical way. The majority of our students are from Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland and will go on to work within the news media here. It is important that not only do they have an understanding of general ethical issues, but also those peculiar to the post-conflict society in Northern Ireland.

All staff teaching practice and law are former or current journalists with considerable experience of dealing with ethical issues in the course of their work.

Teaching of ethics covers four main areas:

- **Academic theoretical module;** Journalism and Society, which addresses issues such as objectivity and balance within a theoretical context.
- **NCTJ law modules** and the new Broadcast Journalism modules address ethics and codes of conduct such as the, PCC, Ofcom etc within a traditional classroom setting, and tested through examination.
- **Guest speakers.** Throughout the academic year the students are addressed by a series of senior editorial figures from the news media in Northern Ireland. These are opportunities for discussion with the students about real-life ethical issues and a range of editorial dilemmas and their potential solutions.

- **News days.** Importantly, this is where the theory is put into practice. Students undertake a large number of live, real time news days for print, online, radio and TV. The students work in a variety of editorial roles on the news which is happening on that day. They are expected to produce work which satisfies high standards both in production and presentation but which is also legally and ethically sound. These days regularly present common everyday situations and decisions to be made-for example if and when to name the victim of a car crash if it hasn't yet been established that the family has been informed. The students are expected to be able to stand over all the editorial decisions they take. A series of professional guest editors will challenge them on their decision making processes.