



The BJTC and Overseas Students

It needs to be understood that our accredited courses are aimed at the UK jobs market and may not necessarily be the most suitable for overseas students aiming to return home to work.

They contain significant elements of material exclusive and crucial to that UK jobs market – broadcast-based (not newspaper) media law, ethics, regulation, editorial policy, public affairs – which may be irrelevant to overseas students.

And implicitly they are aimed at students who can tell a story on radio, TV or online, accurately and safely, (keeping the employers out of courts) engaging the listener or viewer – with complete command of the English language.

Students for whom English is a second language may be at a disadvantage on these courses. For these reasons, several of the colleges and universities, whose courses we do accredit, have decided to offer International courses designed for and aimed specifically at overseas students. They may for instance, offer top-up tuition in English for journalism, leave out or concentrate less on those areas of law, ethics and regulation so crucial for broadcast journalists working in the UK, or concentrate more on global journalism.

But it should be clearly understood that while these courses may take place in the same departments, use the same facilities and equipment and are often taught by the same staff, they are NOT (as yet) accredited by the BJTC.

However, increasing globalisation of news output begs several questions about the need to be familiar with UK media law, regulation and editorial policy – perhaps the most important one being - “Where are we most likely to be sued if we get this wrong?”

It’s clear that organisations like the BBC, Sky News, Reuters and CNN have invested heavily in overseas bureaux and recruitment and that material gathered abroad has to meet UK legal, regulatory and programme requirements when broadcast here.

The training implications of all this are still developing and the BJTC has launched a study of the issues, particularly of language and selection of students.

English Language

An overseas student studying any subject in the UK clearly has to have an academic knowledge of English – it goes without saying that UK broadcast journalism requires complete command of the colloquial, grammatical, often technical language of both oral and written English, in addition to the taught, essential (and different) skills of writing for radio, TV, online or telecoms.

Every overseas student applying for a broadcast journalism course in the UK should be expected to hold an International English Language Training System qualification and can also be expect to be tested by admission tutors.

The BJTC asks for a minimum standard of 7.5 in each section of the IELTS (not an average) but many feel this is not high enough.

Admission to courses is usually by selection interview and a number of tests – writing, voice and general knowledge.

The best way to carry these out is face-to-face, but there are obvious practical problems for overseas students. Interviews are therefore often carried out by telephone or email with inherent difficulties over control of the tests – some are carried out by correspondence only.

There have been cases of abuse of the system.

Any problem quickly becomes apparent when studies start – BJTC accredited courses are not equipped to teach remedial English, so individual students' studies can suffer if they are not fully proficient in spoken and written English.

Information about IELTS can be obtained from Regional Offices of the British Council.

Recently came news that the National Union of Journalists is developing an on-line, distance learning programme in English for Journalists – aimed more for domestic students whose command of the language also causes problems.

But it will clearly have great potential for international students too.

No information at the moment about cost or availability but any news will immediately go onto the BJTC website.

Other issues

Fees for BJTC accredited courses range from about £2000 to £6000 depending mainly on whether the course is based at a Further Education or Higher Education institution – and the BJTC has no control over those fee levels.

They are subsidised by the British Government, but overseas students from outside the EU don't qualify for them and can expect to pay double the relevant fees.

It may also be worth bearing in mind that living expenses can be higher in London than other regions of the UK.

Several of the BJTC industry partners (BBC, ITV News Group, Sky News) offer bursaries, scholarships or sponsorship to those students who've been offered a firm place on a BJTC accredited course.

Individual colleges or universities also have other bursary agreements with a variety of sources – students should inquire about them as they apply for places.

These bursaries are immensely valuable, taking care of academic fees and living expenses, offering mentors and guaranteed work placements – but no guarantee of a job.

Additionally may also traineeships be available from the BBC, ITV News Group, Sky News, Channel 4 and one or two commercial radio stations – usually for those who are completing, or have completed, their courses.

Attendance on a course in the UK will require British residency and this should be explored at an early stage with the British Foreign Office and/or Home Office or the nearest British High Commission or Embassy.

The admissions office of most colleges or universities will also have up-to-date information about residency requirements for individual countries.

The BJTC has no league tables of "best" courses for the reason that the content and aims of the courses varies significantly and in any case, they all meet the approval of the UK broadcasting industry.

Some train students in single disciplines – radio, TV or online. Some teach "bi-media," – a specialist role for journalists who could be expected to report on their story for both radio and TV on the same day.

Others aim for "multi-media" – and teach the skills of working on radio, TV, online and print.

Most aim for varying concentrations of radio and TV as separate sets of skills and knowledge.

