

**NCFE**

**CANDIDATE**  
**INTERVIEW**  
**PACK**

# Shape real change with an NCFE career

Congratulations on securing an interview with NCFE – we can't wait to meet you! We've pulled this pack together to help you prepare for your interview, but don't forget you can always contact our Talent Team at [talent@ncfe.org.uk](mailto:talent@ncfe.org.uk) if you have any questions.

NCFE is a place where employees not only make a positive social impact – influencing the lives of thousands of learners – but where you will have the opportunity to influence the way we work and directly shape our future direction.

With over 175 years of experience, our core purpose remains at the heart of the organisation – to promote and advance learning to create a fairer, more inclusive society. We've built a high-performance workplace culture, backed by a strong set of values and behaviours, to ensure we're working together as one organisation to make sure no learner is left behind.

Our aim is to provide rich and rewarding career experiences for all our colleagues. We want all our people to connect deeply with our purpose, to feel inspired by our vision for the future and to be fulfilled by, and valued for, their contribution to achieving our organisational goals.

# Who we are

**We're NCFE:** an educational charity and leader in vocational and technical learning. We combine over 175 years of experience with deep insight, working with a network of expert collaborators to shape smarter solutions around the greatest learning needs. In doing this, we're working for a fairer education system for all learners to power inclusivity and choice.

In 1848, we were born from the belief that no learner should be left behind. Today, we're taking up that cause with fresh energy.

## **Our purpose**

Our core purpose is to promote and advance learning to help create a fairer society.

This same goal has inspired our people for more than 175 years.

We're serious about changing education for the better, backed by a promise to support the delivery of the highest possible quality learning experiences for our learners – our ultimate beneficiaries.

For colleagues at NCFE, our purpose is one of our greatest motivations. Employees not only make a positive social impact – influencing the lives of thousands of learners – their contributions affect what people learn, and the way that learning is developed and delivered.

We believe that through shaping smarter learning, we can help to build a fairer society, create opportunities to progress, and ensure no learner is left behind, regardless of their status or background. This means helping more individuals to realise their true potential – in turn, establishing more sustainable communities.

## **Our strategy**

At NCFE, we're on an exciting journey to maximise our contribution to delivering a fairer and more inclusive society through education. Our strategy will enable us to achieve this overarching goal.

Find out more [here](#)

# Our values and behaviours

Our values and behaviours are an important element of who we are as a business and guide our actions. They ensure we cultivate a purpose-led and high-performance culture at NCFE. Values and behaviours play a key role in our performance management processes, including 1-2-1s, monthly check-ins with your manager and end of year reviews, to measure how we're all demonstrating these in our day-to-day roles.

## Value

### Invested in the learner

We're here for the learner

## Behaviours

### Collaborative

I build commitment to the cause

### Accountable

I step up and own it

## Value

### Involved in the solution

We blend vision and action

## Behaviours

### Courageous

I challenge the status quo

### Respectful

I bring out the best in others

## Value

### Inspired by the impact

We do everything for a purpose

## Behaviours

### Insightful

I gather insight that matters and act on it

### Purposeful

I take a solutions focus

## Value

# Invested in the learner

### We're here for the learner

Every decision we make begins and ends with the learning need.

We believe in making a positive social impact, so we pivot to wherever the need is greatest and rally others to our cause – collaborating where others compete, openly sharing what we've learnt and reinvesting what we earn.

## Behaviours

### Collaborative

#### I build commitment to the cause

- I communicate effectively, opening up conversations and sharing best practice to build productive relationships
- I take opportunities to include teams from across the business, focusing on collective outcomes and adapting my style
- I make the most of our internal expertise by identifying strengths across our teams and sharing my own skills
- I encourage diverse points of view and listen to ideas that challenge my own, to produce my best work

### Accountable

#### I step up and own it

- I take ownership for activities and play a hands-on role, to drive them forward to completion
- I take responsibility for my decisions and learn from past experiences
- I am a role model, setting high standards and going the extra mile
- I help drive my development, identifying skills gaps, seeking feedback and acting upon it

## Value

# Involved in the solution

### We blend vision and action

We don't just challenge the status quo, we challenge ourselves to resolve it. We combine ambition with the scale and determination to make an impact. If we say we'll do something, we do it, rolling up our sleeves and turning expertise into practical change. The bottom line is a difference we can point to.

## Behaviours

### Courageous

#### I challenge the status quo

- I take the initiative, using my expertise to make decisions confidently and proactively
- I challenge my colleagues constructively, to promote high performance
- I innovate, scoping out future opportunities to deliver greater value
- I step outside my comfort zone, speaking up with ideas and getting involved in new work

### Respectful

#### I bring out the best in others

- I value the expertise and experience of others, trusting them to act autonomously and empowering them to perform to their full potential
- I anticipate the impact my work will have on other teams and partners, so I communicate early and plan effectively
- I inspire professional pride, deepening my area of expertise and championing it inside the business
- I take a coaching approach, focusing on strengths and celebrating successes

## Value

# Inspired by the impact

### We do everything for a purpose

Because we care for learners, we judge ourselves on outcomes. For us, progress must have purpose. Every learning experience should create opportunity that wasn't there before. So we act with insight and intent – identifying the most impactful interventions, setting targets, stripping out inefficiency and measuring the positive difference we make.

## Behaviours

### Insightful

#### I gather insight that matters and act on it

- I am open-minded, assessing whether our data and metrics offer insight on the decisions we face
- I draw out connections from all the relevant information, to make evidence-based decisions
- I am inquisitive, using research to ask probing questions and discover root causes, rather than settling for easy answers
- I think critically about the cost and benefit of my actions, having identified the greatest needs and opportunities

### Purposeful

#### I take a solutions focus

- I prioritise activities with the best outcomes for my stakeholders in mind and can always evidence the 'why' behind my choices
- I see the big picture, aware of where my work fits into the efforts of the wider organisation to deliver learner value
- I am resilient, embracing change positively and adapting quickly
- I measure performance against our commercial and social goals, pushing us to put 'lessons learnt' into action

# Developing your career at NCFE

As a learning organisation, our people are our most important asset at NCFE and we aim to invest and provide continuous development opportunities for our colleagues. If successful in securing a role with us, you'll be joining a group of people who share an exciting vision for the future of education. There's never been a better time to work for us, but don't just take our word for it - here's what some of our brilliant colleagues have to say:



I really enjoy working for NCFE as it encourages collaboration, team working and progression of its employees. I've been given the opportunity to work with and learn from a diverse group of people, who have a wide range of knowledge and experience in the education sector. This has helped me to develop and progress within the business, moving to a team leading role and working on multiple projects, including T Levels."

**Susan Jobling**

Team Leader, Learning Technologies and Resources



In the 3 years I have worked at NCFE, I've developed both personally and professionally. Entering the business as a Development Officer, I've been supported by not only direct line managers but by all levels of the NCFE leadership structure to achieve the position of Assistant Head of Product and Content Development."

**Gemma Wilson**

Assistant Head of Product and Content



I've been very fortunate to have been supported in my personal and professional development by NCFE. I started working for NCFE in 2006 and I've been supported to develop my knowledge and understanding of assessment practice and principles through completion of qualifications and professional development. I have worked in many roles throughout my time in the business and have been fortunate to be involved in the growing assessment function throughout this time."

**Joanna Fairless**

Head of Assessment Design





Following 14 years in the FE sector, I gave up my full-time permanent role and started working at NCFE over 9 years ago, in a 1-year fixed-term position as Quality Assurance Manager. Since then, I've worked in several areas, building each time on what I've learned previously. During this time, NCFE has supported me on numerous occasions with my professional development, which has led to progression several times, ultimately leading to my current position on the Executive team."

**Stewart Foster**  
Chief Regulatory Officer



I've worked at NCFE for over 10 years and still love it just as much now as when I started. NCFE has invested so much in my development over the years, supporting my progression from a Communications Assistant right through to a Head of Department. I've seen a lot of exciting changes over my time here, which makes every day feel interesting and means you never stop being challenged. NCFE is an ambitious organisation, constantly striving to increase its reach and influence and ultimately make a difference in more lives. It's fantastic to feel like you are part of that journey."

**Lindsay Plumpton**  
Head of PR and Communications



I started working at NCFE in 2017 and during my time here, I've had the opportunity to take up various courses and qualifications and have received coaching sessions to help me progress in my career. I've moved from managing a single team of 3 developers, a small subsidiary company of NCFE, to managing the NCFE Software Delivery team, which consists of nearly 50 managers, testers and developers. I've always had something to be aiming for, and I now thrive off trying to give my team the same opportunities to grow and develop."

**Liam Wheldon**  
Software Delivery Manager






# Your NCFE candidate experience

Here at NCFE, we proactively attract, recruit and retain a diverse range of talent through building and sustaining a reputation for providing excellent career opportunities and experiences for all our people.

We are fair, equitable, efficient, and effective in all our recruitment practices, upholding the highest ethical and professional standards for both internal and external candidates.

We recruit for competence, organisational and cultural fit (aligning with our values and behaviours), as well as potential, focusing on current and future business needs.

We endeavour to provide you with a positive recruitment experience, and we're therefore committed to:

-  Giving you a designated point of contact to keep you informed at each stage of the process and answer any questions
-  Supporting you to succeed by providing key information to help you understand more about our vision, strategy, values and behaviours, as well as the role you're applying for
-  Providing our hiring managers with the training and support they need to carry out engaging and professional interviews that provide the opportunity for a quality, two-way discussion
-  Giving you timely, honest, and professional feedback following your interview
-  Welcoming and seeking your feedback so that we can continually look to improve the candidate experience.

# What to expect in your interview

Here at NCFE, we want to cultivate a purpose-led, collaborative, high-performance culture. To help us achieve this goal, and to contribute to our collective success, we aim to bring on board individuals who not only bring the skills and experience required for a role, but who live and breathe our values and behaviours.

Whilst the interview selection methods might differ depending on the role you are applying for (for example, you might be required to produce a presentation or complete a short task), we always include competency-style questions as part of our interview process. This means that we're looking for specific examples of when and how you have demonstrated specific skills, values, or behaviours relevant to the job role.

## Useful guidance on answering competency-based questions

It can be useful to use a structure to answer these questions and we recommend using the STAR model, as per the below:

**Situation** - describe a situation/problem/challenge that you have encountered

**Task** - describe the task that the situation required (what you were trying to achieve) or your ideas for resolving the problem

**Action** - describe the actions you took, why you took them, and any obstacles that you had to overcome

**Results** - highlight outcomes achieved and what you learned from this experience

When thinking about examples, try to choose those that will allow the interviewers to see how your skills/experiences/behaviours can be transferred to the role you are applying for.

# Preparing for your interview

We want you to feel as prepared as possible before your interview with us and so we recommend that you:

- Review the job description, considering the skills and experience you can bring in relation to the role
- Familiarise yourself with our values and behaviours, it might be helpful to think of examples of when you've demonstrated these in your current or previous employment
- Visit our website and social media pages to find out all about NCFE
- Remember that the interview is a two-way communication process and so to prepare any questions you would like to ask the panel (it's just as important for you to get a feel for us as it is for us to get a feel for you)

Need further support to feel prepared? You can always contact our Talent Team at [talent@ncfe.org.uk](mailto:talent@ncfe.org.uk)

# How to find us

Whilst we recruit from across the country and many of our team members work flexibly across the UK in a variety of locations, you may attend your interview at our head office in Newcastle upon Tyne.

You can find our head office at:

**NCFE**  
**Q6 Quorum Business Park**  
**Benton Lane**  
**Newcastle upon Tyne**  
**NE12 8BT**

**Car:** We're just 4 miles from Newcastle City Centre and within an 8 minute drive of both the A1 and A19. If you're using a SatNav, it may be easier to use the postcode for the business park which is NE12 8BX. Don't forget, if you need a parking space you will need to book this in advance.



**Bus:** There are several bus services from Newcastle City Centre to Quorum, please check online for the latest services and timetables.



**Air:** Newcastle International Airport is just a 15 minute drive away with its own Metro Station providing public transport connections to Quorum within 35 minutes.



**Metro:** Four Lane Ends is our nearest Metro Station. It's a 15 minute walk away or you can take the '555' shuttle bus operated by Arriva to Quorum Business Park which takes 5 minutes.



**Rail:** Newcastle Central Station provides fast rail links to the rest of the UK, with services reaching London King's Cross within 2 hours 50 minutes.



**Bicycle:** Quorum is surrounded by a network of cycle routes and we have on-site facilities to cater for cyclists including showers, lockers and secure cycle parking.



**Taxi:** There are a number of taxi ranks around Newcastle City Centre.



## What about if your interview is being held remotely?

Our remote interviews are conducted via Microsoft Teams. Prior to your interview, you will be sent full confirmation via email which will include a link to your Microsoft Teams meeting. We recommend testing this link in advance and making our Talent Team aware if you have any problems, so that we can ensure the process is as smooth as possible for you on the day.

# What else do I need to know?

## Reasonable adjustments

At NCFE, we aim to attract a diverse range of talent and will consider all candidates based on their skills, experience and alignment with our values and behaviours, to ensure a fair recruitment process.

If there are any reasonable adjustments you may need us to make, please contact our Talent Team at [talent@ncfe.org.uk](mailto:talent@ncfe.org.uk) so they can ensure you are fully supported throughout the interview process.

You can find out more about our commitment to ED&I by visiting the below page on our website:

## Try to relax and take your time

When answering questions, try to remember that it's not a race. You might want to ask for a minute to consider your answer when asked a question and if you aren't sure of the question itself, then you might want to ask the interviewer to repeat it. This is your time to shine, so try to relax and enjoy the process!

## Remember that we're on your side

The interview process isn't designed to catch you out or make you anxious – we simply want to find out more about you. That's why we'll always try and give you adequate notice to prepare and ensure that we give everyone in the process an equal opportunity to demonstrate their skills.

## One last thing

It would be helpful for us to hear your feedback on your recruitment experience at NCFE, so that we can continually look to improve our processes and improve the candidate experience. Therefore, if you could spare a few minutes, we'd really appreciate you completing our 'Your Candidate Experience - Feedback Survey', which will be emailed to you shortly after your interview.

**Congratulations once again on getting to this stage and good luck!**