

*Approved by the Council of the Baltic Film, Media, Arts and Communication School*

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dated 23 November 2016*

TALLINN UNIVERSITY  
BALTIC FILM, MEDIA, ARTS AND COMMUNICATION SCHOOL

## GUIDELINES

for the formatting, presentation and defence  
of a **Creative Work (final project) BA thesis**  
within the AV Media program

Tallinn 2016

## 1. The Creative Work (final project)

The Creative Work (final project) BA thesis could be:

- a short fiction film,
- a short documentary film,
- a TV broadcast (show) or TV documentary in any approved format or genre,
- any other work or collection of audio-visual media content, including a cross-media project

what is created and produced by the students under the supervision of their advisers. Students should be involved into the final project in creative positions, as stated in the paragraph 9 of these guidelines.

The Thesis Production has to be accompanied by submission of a written supplement – a Production Book (see paragraph 10 - requirements for the Production Book). In addition to the formal data, reflecting the production, the Book should entail short critical-analytical papers from all students, who are defending the production project as a thesis.

## 2. Prerequisites

In order to be allowed to the Thesis Production defence students have to complete the curriculum studies in the prescribed load, required courses and optional modules. The students who have been admitted until 2015/2016 computer skills appropriate for university studies are required. Students' language skills must be at the C1 level of European Language Portfolio and this should be approved by international language certificates (IELTS, TOEFL) or by passing C.1.2. level English course at the university.

## 3. Milestones and deadlines

**3.1** For the students who are expecting to graduate in the end of **Spring semester** (exact dates are announced for each academic year):

- |   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| - submission of the tentative production proposal to the Thesis Committee | November                            |
| - presentation and pitching of the tentative production proposal          | November                            |
| - approval of the adviser(s) by the program curator                       | November-December                   |
| - pre-production starts   | November-December                   |
| - registration for the thesis production                                  | end of January                      |
| - tentative script, treatment, top line budget ready                      | end of February                     |
| - meetings with the advisor   | every 2-3 weeks                     |
| - endorsement of the script and the production plan by the adviser        | latest March, 1 <sup>st</sup> week  |
| - production period   | March - April                       |
| - post-production period  | April - May, 1-3 <sup>rd</sup> week |
| - working on the production book  | April- May, 1-3 <sup>rd</sup> week  |
| - completed file stored in BFM storage for defence                        | May, 3 <sup>rd</sup> week           |
| - 2 DVDs and the Production Book to the study councillor                  | May, 3 <sup>rd</sup> week           |
| - public screening and defence of the thesis production                   | June, 1 <sup>st</sup> week          |
| - final grades  | latest 2 days after defence         |
| - master copy file and archiving documents to the archive                 | before June, 15                     |
| - graduation ceremony   | June 3 <sup>rd</sup> week           |

**3.1** For the students who are expecting to graduate in the end of **Fall semester** (exact dates are announced for each academic year):

- submission of the tentative production proposal to the Thesis Committee April
- presentation and pitching of the tentative production proposal April
- approval of the adviser by the program curator April-May
- pre-production starts May
- registration for the thesis production September
- tentative script, treatment, top line budget ready latest the end of September
- meetings with the advisor every 2-3 weeks
- endorsement of the script and the production plan by the adviser latest in October
- production period when prepared and planned
- post-production period when planned
- working on the production book November-December
- completed file stored in BFM storage for defence January, 1<sup>st</sup> week
- 2 DVDs and the Production Book to the study councillor January, 1<sup>st</sup> week
- public screening and defence of the thesis production January, 2-3<sup>rd</sup> week
- final grades latest 2 days after defence
- master copy file and archiving documents to the archive end of January
- diploma could be obtained February
- graduation ceremony June 3<sup>rd</sup> week

The student shall participate in the **information hour** dedicated to Thesis Production in October of each academic year. Alternatively, the student will familiarize himself/herself with the information provided by the study specialist.

#### **4. Production Proposal**

To start the Thesis production process students have to propose the idea(s) to the Thesis Committee in a form of written proposal. The proposal paper should include following descriptive parts: a short synopsis, general aim (objectives, focus, premise), elements of form (duration, format and genre), short summary of the plot (vision, basic treatment), resources (talent needs, tentative budgetary needs, initial production timeline).

#### **5. Thesis Committee**

The Thesis Committee includes the permanent faculty as well as adjunct faculty members who are teaching the AV media program. The program curator could propose professionals from the industry if needed. Along the Thesis process students (production teams) have to submit the **Thesis production proposal** (see paragraph 4) to the Committee (planned for November (or April) of the previous to defence year. The active production phase could not start without the approval and permission from the Thesis Committee. If needed, the Committee should discuss the proposals several times, until they will be approved.

Based on Thesis Committee's approval of the production proposal and advisor(s), the project should be also approved by an order of the director of BFM in ŐIS no later than during December (respectively May) of each academic year.

#### **6. Advising**

Each student has to get into agreement with one of BFM AV media permanent or adjunct faculty or media professionals outside BFM to be his or her thesis adviser. Advisers have to be approved by the

Thesis Committee. If needed, several advisers for one project could be appointed (for writing, directing and cinematography etc.). The advisers have to hold a MA degree or be recognised professionals in media industry.

Students, together with their advisers have to work out and agree on a proper working plan based on timeline presented in p 3. (what could be signed by both parties). Students are responsible for regular meetings with their advisers. These meetings should take place at least every two to three weeks during the process of thesis production. The advisers have to make sure that the students are properly engaged in pre-production, production and post-production process. The advisers have to guide students towards original treatment of chosen idea, help them to find important and valuable sources, to elaborate a good and executable scenario, appropriate technical solutions, production plan and budget.

Both students and instructors should pay attention on adjustment of ideas, technical and financial options. Advisers should also guide students in their creative efforts in order to create an interesting, meaningful, artistic and compelling result. Special attention should be paid on meeting deadlines during all steps from pre- to post-production. Where necessary, the advisers should advise on time management, restrictions of the topic, treatment etc.

The program curator ensures the proper involvement of advisers into production process by signing an agreement of thesis advising. Students and advisers are suggested to report to the program curator if any serious problems endangering successful working on the project may occur. In case of serious discrepancies both the advisers and students are entitled to initiate the end of their cooperation by submitting respective arguments to the program curator in a written form.

## 7. Equipment booking

To start the active phase of production students have to get the acceptance from their adviser and the curator of the AV Media curriculum. Booking and renting BFM equipment should be done in accordance with BFM Production Manual (<http://www.bfm.ee/production-centre/production-forms/>).

## 8. Financing of the Thesis Production

Students can apply for a creative stipend to execute the Thesis production. The maximum sum of creative stipend is foreseen in BFM annual budget and depends on the actual needs and specifics of the production. In order to apply for the stipend a special form, Application of Creative Stipend (<http://www.bfm.ee/production-centre/production-forms/>), signed by the Thesis advisor should be submitted to the program curator. After approval of the request by program curator the resources will be transferred to the production producer's account in time and parts agreed upon.

## 9. Special Requirements for Thesis Production

- Graduating students should be involved into the Thesis production **in one of the creative positions** (scriptwriter/co-writer, director, cinematographer, editor, producer). It is expected, that other supporting crew positions (script editor, art director, sound recorder, sound designer, colour corrector, gaffer, TV host/journalist, TV mixer etc). are also taken and executed by the members of the current team. Supporting roles could be partly performed by other BFM students, if needed.
- **Maximum five students** could execute and defend one Thesis production. The decision regarding the number of students and their roles in Thesis production should be approved by the Thesis Committee and is based on the proper and fair assessment of the amount of work and responsibility taken by the students in particular Thesis production.
- The actual duration (running time) of Thesis production, the production budget and other production

needs have to be properly discussed with the adviser, who should finally, at the end of the pre-production, endorse the script, production plan and the budget and the request for the creative stipend.

- The file carrying the Thesis production (in file format what meets the technical requirements stated by the BFM Production Centre) has to be stored in BFM storage for defence in time prescribed by the deadlines (see paragraph 3).
- At the same time 2 DVD copies of the production and the Production Book should be submitted to the AV media program study councillor. The DVD-s must be clearly labelled and dated. The Production Book should be submitted in 2 paper copies (one hard-cover copy and one spiral cover) and a PDF file of it should be sent by e-mail to study councillor.
- Archiving of the work and submission of the **finalized master file of the work** to the BFM media archive is a prerequisite to receive the BA diploma. The documents and regulation of archiving are prescribed in the BFM Production Handbook (Archiving of Projects) and available from <http://www.tlu.ee/en/production/Production-Forms>.
- The productions, made in other languages than English must be subtitled in English.

## 10. The Production Book

The Thesis Production Book is written and compiled based on the nature of the production and the crew positions taken. The responsibility of completing the Production Book bears the producer. The Production Book should include:

- a title page
- one-liner or focus (a single line which describes the story);
- synopsis
- treatment (written by the director)
- history of the project
- description of research and background information
- script (storyboard and/or camera plans in case of multi-camera production are optional)
- list of the crew
- list of cast or main participants
- budget
- production schedule
- critical-analytical and self-reflection papers (3-5 pages) regarding their role, artistic decisions and solutions from each of the crew members, defending the work as a thesis
- talent releases (contracts); talent releases for non speaking artists
- location contracts
- copyright releases (for music and for tape or film inserts); if original music (there must be a contract between the composer, musicians and the producer of the project)
- in case the thesis production is based on a published work of others, the original work should be mentioned; the rights and agreement to use this work should be obtained and the proof should be included into the Production book in case if the thesis production will be shown outside the BFM
- list of sponsors if any
- list of the co-financers and/or co-producers if any.

## 11. The Defence of Thesis Production

The Thesis Production defence is executed as a public screening and discussion in the presence of defending students, defence committee, other faculty members, the reviewer (if possible to attain), other guests and students. Defending students have to be present and can't defend their thesis by Skype or other platforms.

The curator of the program is responsible for appointing the reviewer(s) of the production. If needed, several reviewers for one work could be used. The written review of the work has to be made available to the defending students at least one day before the defence day. The reviewer is expected to assess the work and the Production book based on the grading principles (see p 12), he/she is not asked to propose the grade.

## 12. Grading

The defence commission has to grade the work and achievement of each of defending students (according to the roles taken by them in the production) on the grading scale from A to F, where A stands for “excellent” and “F” for “failed”. While grading the production, the commission use following criteria and guidelines:

### **Idea (10% of the grade):**

- **originality**
- **complexity**
- **social or artistic value**

**Originality:** assessment of the originality, newness and personality of the idea and approach (depending on genre, format, means of storytelling and expression);

**Complexity:** assessment of the validity of the artistic, stylistic and technical means chosen for implementation of the idea and creative intention; complexity of script and treatment;

**Social and artistic value:** assessment of the potential social, cultural, journalistic, ethical etc. value of the idea, message and function of the work.

### **Implementation and execution (70% of the grade):**

- **overall result and outcome**
- **audiovisual quality**
- **impact and artistic value**

**Overall result and outcome:** overall assessment of the creative quality and outcome of the work, realisation of the intentions from main important aspects (directing, camerawork, editing, producing), creative, artistic, journalistic etc. result. The highest grade could be considered for works what meet the level to be shown on student festivals.

**Audiovisual quality:** assessment of the technical quality of the work (visuals and sound);

**Impact and artistic value:** assessment of the artistic, functional impact of the work and its content, clarity and compellingness and passion of the treatment, story and message.

### **Production Book (20% of the grade):**

- **content of the production book**
- **quality of the critical-analytical and self-reflection part**
- **meeting formal requirements, style and presentation**

**Content of the production book:** assessment of the completeness, informativeness and content quality;

**Quality of the critical-analytical and self-reflection part:** assessment of the thoroughness of critical professional self-reflection;

**Meeting formal requirements, style and presentation:** assessment of maintaining formal requirements, clarity and thoroughness of the presentation.

Points, given by the members of the defence commission are summarised and arithmetic mean will be taken. The actual mean points are corresponding to following grades:

- A 90-100 points - the student has performed an outstanding work
- B 80-89 points - the student has shown very good performance
- C 70-79 points - the student has performed well, but there are certain insufficiencies regarding the details
- D 60-69 points - the student has shown satisfactory performance, but there are certain insufficiencies regarding some basics and in details
- E 50-59 points - the student has shown weak performance, but has produced a work what still satisfies the minimum level required for passing
- F 49 points or less - the student has not produced a satisfactory piece as required

The defence commission might discuss the grades if needed and can vote in order to lift or reduce the grade by 1 step.