

*TU BFM Board Decision No. 1-6/151,
dated 3 October 2016*

TALLINN UNIVERSITY

**BALTIC FILM, MEDIA, ARTS AND
COMMUNICATION SCHOOL**

GUIDELINES

for the

formatting, presentation and defence

of a MA thesis

within the Audiovisual Media: Documentary Film curriculum

Tallinn 2016

1. The Work

The MA Thesis Production (16EAP or 24 EAP) is **an half an hour creative documentary** created by the student under the supervision of an adviser. The students must take the positions of scriptwriter and director, for the other positions fellow students or professionals can be involved. In addition to the master video file, the thesis should have a **written supplement** (see requirements for Production Book below).

The aim of the MA Thesis Production is to test the student's professional skills and creativity in creative documentary making. The documentary must correspond to the technical and creative parameters of professional works that are required for professional festivals and television broadcast.

The idea of the MA Thesis comes from the student and is developed during the 3rd semester of the studies in the course "From the idea to the package", which ends with the public pitch of the idea. TV program does not qualify.

MA Thesis Production cannot be replaced by the theoretical research work.

2. Prerequisites for defence

In order to be allowed to the defence a student has to complete the curriculum of studies in the prescribed load, take the courses in compulsory subjects

As an additional requirement for students who have been admitted until 2015/2016 the foreign language at the B2 level in television and at the C1 level in documentary film production of the European Language Portfolio, as well as computer skills appropriate for university studies are required.

3. Milestones and deadlines for students who are expecting to graduate in Spring semester (exact dates are specified for each academic year):

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|---|--|
| - submission of the tentative production proposal to the curator of the program | September |
| - tentative script, treatment, budget | November |
| - presentation of the tentative production proposal to the panel of professionals | December |
| - selection of adviser | October |
| - registration of the thesis production in the Production Department | January |
| - applying for additional financial resources (if required) | February, 3 rd week |
| - meeting with the advisor | at least once |
| per month | |
| - shooting period | February - April |
| - editing and post-production | April - May |
| - final title in English and Estonian to the curator of the program. | April, 2 nd week |
| - working on the production book | May, 1 st week |
| - DVD (3) and bound supplement (2 copies) to the curator of the program | May, 2 nd week |
| - DVD copy and the supplement from the curator to the opponent | May, 2 nd week |
| - resume from the adviser to the curator | May, 3 rd week |
| - short resume from opponent to the curator | May, 3 rd week |
| - screening and defence of thesis production | May, 4 th -June 1 st |

- final grades

at the same
day of defence

4. Advising

Student can find an adviser among the teachers of BFM or in case of specific approach of the creative work from outside circles of professional film makers. Program curator has to approve the student's choice and publish the decision in OIS. In case of non-BFM advisor it has to be affordable and reasonable. In case student is not able to find the advisor the curator of the program finds an advisor for the student.

External advisers have to be approved by the Curator of the Program. Students are responsible for the regular meetings with their advisors. These meetings should take place at least every two to three weeks during the process of thesis writing. The advisors have to make sure that the students are engaged in production process. The advisors have to guide students for original treatment of chosen idea, help them to find important and valuable sources, to elaborate a good scenario and appropriate production plan. 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 documentary film. Special attention should be paid on meeting deadlines during all steps from pre- to post-production. Where necessary, the advisors should advise on time management, restrictions of the topic, etc.

In case the student wants to change the advisor he/she has to deliver a written application with the argumentation to the curator of the program. The curator has to decide in one week since receiving of the application.

5. Defence Commission

Minimum three member Defence Commission is appointed by the Curator of Documentary MA program and will be confirmed by the order of the director of the institute and includes the permanent faculty as well as adjunct faculty members who are teaching documentary film and experienced documentary film makers from outside BFM.

6. Production Proposal and Pitching

To start the Thesis process students have to propose the idea to the Curator of the Program in a form of written proposal. The proposal paper (Mini Kit) should include following descriptive parts: a logline, short synopsis, a treatment (objectives, focus, premise, style), technical specification (duration, format, and main credit), budget, CV of the director.

7. Equipment booking

To start the active phase of production students have to get the general acceptance from the Thesis Committee (agreement on proposal and positive result of the pitching). Booking and renting equipment is in accordance with BFM Production Manual (<http://www.bfm.ee/production-centre/production-forms/>).

8. Special Requirements for Thesis Production

- The duration of final production, the preliminary budget and the needs for hiring crew members (cameramen, editor, sound engineer, lighting engineer etc.) have to be properly discussed with the adviser who should endorse the script and the production plan.

- The students should be involved into the thesis production on **at least** as a scriptwriter and a director.
- The **master copy** has to be produced digitally at least in Full HD quality (1920x1080). The final project has to be submitted for the defence on DVD in three (3) copies. All DVD-s must be clearly labelled and dated.
- The **finalized project master file** must be submitted for BFM media archive before student receives his/her diploma. The technical requirements for the final project master file are described in the BFM Production Handbook (Arhiving of Projects).
- The films if made in the other languages than English must be subtitled in English.
- All audiovisual submissions have to be accompanied by a **written report (Production Book)**, which is submitted in 2 paper copies (one hard-cover copy and one spiral cover) and one electronic copy (on CD).

9. The Production Book

The Production Book should include:

- a title page
- logline
- synopsis
- treatment
- history of the project
- description of research
- self-evaluation
- list of crew
- budget
- transcript of the film
- production schedule
- release forms (agreement) with main characters
- location contracts
- copyright releases (for music and for tape or film inserts)
- list of sponsors if any
- list of the co-financers and/or co-producers if any.

10. Grading

The defence commission has to give a grade for the thesis production on the grading scale from A to F, where “A” stands for “excellent” and “F” for “failed”. In this grade the advisor and the reviewer provide an additional opinion for the defence commission.

For the commission the following criterias are the guideline:

Prod. Book 20%	IDEA 20%			IMPLEMENTATION 60%		
	Originality	Complexity	Social effect	Creativity	Audio-visual quality	Overall impact
1-20	1-10	1-5	1-5	1-30	1-15	1-15

90-100 points A

80-90 points B

70-80 points C

60-70 points D

50-60 points E

less than 50 points F

Points of the commission members will be summarised and arithmetic mean taken.

Commission can vote in order to lift or reduce the grade by 1 step.

The curator of the program is responsible for finding the reviewer and confirming her/him. The review has to be made accessible for the student one day before the defence latest.