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TU BFM Board Decision No. 1-6/195, dated 27th November 2020*

**Audiovisual Media BA Thesis Production Guidelines  
for Students and Supervisors**

Tallinn 2020

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## 1. The Work

The Bachelor's Thesis Production can be:

- a **short fiction film** (recommended length 15 min),
- a **short documentary film** (recommended length 25 min),

which are created and produced by the student(s) under the supervision of their supervisor(s). Students have to be involved in the Thesis Production in different role(s) by accumulating 1,5 points according to following table:

Table 1. Roles in the Thesis Production process

scriptwriting	1,0
co-scriptwriting	0,5
directing	1,0
1 <sup>st</sup> AD	0,5
editing	0,5
producer	1,0
DOP	1,0
sound design	1,0
sound recording	0,5
colour correction	0,5
gaffer	0,5
any other position in the set	0,25

The Thesis Production should be accompanied by a written supplement – a Production Book (see [p 7](#) - requirements for the Production Book).

## 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. Students should prove their English language skills at the C1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

### 3. Milestones and Deadlines

For the students who are intending to graduate at the end of **Spring semester** (exact dates are announced for each academic year separately):

<b>Project Pitching and Declaring Supervisors</b>	
submission of the production proposal to the Thesis Committee (TC)	October 1 <sup>st</sup>
presentation and pitching of the tentative production proposal (TC)	3 <sup>rd</sup> week of October
second presentation and pitching of the tentative production proposals. <b>TC selects the projects for further development. The ones whose project was not selected will team up with the selected projects.</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> week of November
tentative script, treatment, top line budget ready	2 <sup>nd</sup> week of December
final pitch of the production proposals with indication of the supervisor, TC selects the projects to be allowed to production	3 <sup>rd</sup> week of December
approval of the supervisor by the curator	by December 22
<b>Production Schedule</b>	
pre-production starts	November
registration for the thesis production	1 <sup>st</sup> week of December
meetings with the supervisor	every 2-3 weeks
equipment lock (everything has to be booked by then)	February 3
endorsement of the script and the production plan by the supervisor	3 <sup>rd</sup> week of February
production period	February 17 – March 31
post-production, editing	April
post-production, sound and colour, mastering DCP	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	Date approved by BFM's board and published on website
Digital Masterfile and the Production Book to the study counsellor	Date approved by BFM's board and published on website
public screening and defence of the Thesis Production (TC)	June, 1 <sup>st</sup> week
final grades (TC)	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

For the students who are intending to graduate at the end of **Fall semester** (exact dates are announced for each academic year separately):

<b>Project Pitching and Declaring Supervisors</b>	
submission of the production proposal to the Thesis Committee (TC)	3 <sup>rd</sup> week of February
presentation and pitching of the tentative production proposal (TC)	3 <sup>rd</sup> week of March
second presentation and pitching of the tentative production proposals	3 <sup>rd</sup> week of April
tentative script, treatment, top line budget ready	2 <sup>nd</sup> week of May
final pitch of the production proposals with indication of the supervisor, TC selects the projects to be allowed to production	May 15
approval of the supervisor by the curator	by May 22
<b>Production Schedule</b>	
pre-production starts	April
registration for the thesis production	1 <sup>st</sup> week of May
meetings with the supervisor	every 2-3 weeks
equipment lock (everything has to be booked by then)	
endorsement of the script and the production plan by the supervisor	September 20
production period	September - October
post-production, editing	Nov - Dec, 1-3 <sup>rd</sup> week
post-production, sound and colour, mastering DCP	
working on the Production Book	Nov-Dec, 1-3 <sup>rd</sup> week
completed file stored in BFM storage for defence	Date approved by BFM's board and published on website
Digital Masterfile and the Production Book to the study counsellor	Date approved by BFM's board and published on website
public screening and defence of the Thesis Production (TC)	January
final grades (TC)	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

#### 4. Supervision

Implementing the following role: director, producer, DOP (cinematographer), editor, sound designer, student has to enter into an agreement with one of the Audiovisual Media's permanent or adjunct faculty members to be his or her thesis supervisor.

Declaration of the Thesis Title and Thesis Supervisor can be found here:

<https://www.tlu.ee/en/bfm/studies/documents-and-manuals#audiovisual-media-ba>

Supervisors have to be approved by the Thesis Committee. Students are responsible for regular

meetings with their supervisors. These meetings should take place at least every two to three weeks during the process of thesis production. The supervisors have to make sure that the students are properly engaged in pre-production, production and post-production processes. The supervisors should guide students for original treatment of chosen ideas, help them to find important and valuable sources, to elaborate a good scenario and appropriate production plan. Both students and instructors should pay attention to adjustment of ideas, technical and financial options. Supervisors 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 supervisors should advise on time management, restrictions of the topic, treatment etc. The supervisor and the student have the right to terminate their cooperation due to disagreements by submitting a justified application to the head of studies of the institute.

## **5. Thesis Committee**

The Thesis Committee includes the permanent faculty as well as adjunct faculty members who are teaching the AV media program. Along the Thesis process students have to submit the thesis production proposal to the Committee of the previous to defence year. The initial production proposal (s) - idea(s), key crew positions and main production terms have to be submitted, pitched, discussed and approved by the Committee. The active production phase could not start without the general permission from the Thesis Committee.

The Director of the academic unit curating the study program forms the defence committees of the final theses (except for doctoral theses) for the academic year. The committee includes at least three members, including the chairman of the committee who holds a doctoral degree or equivalent qualification or, in a creative field, meets the requirements of professor or associate professor. The defence committees of Bachelor's thesis shall be at least 50% comprised of lecturers who hold a doctoral degree or equivalent qualification or, in a creative field, meet the requirements of professor or associate professor.

At least 2/3 of the members of the defence committee shall participate in the defence.

## **6. Production Proposal**

To start the Thesis production process students have to propose the idea to the Thesis Committee in a form of written proposal. The proposal document should include the 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).

## **7. Equipment Booking**

To start the active phase of production students need to acquire the acceptance from their supervisor and the curator of the Audiovisual Media curriculum.

Application for Thesis project can be found here:

<https://www.tlu.ee/en/bfm/studies/documents-and-manuals#audiovisual-media-ba>

Booking and renting BFM equipment should be done in accordance with BFM Production Handbook:

[https://www.tlu.ee/sites/default/files/Instituudid/BFM/Instituut/Tootmise%20vormid/ENG/BFM\\_Production\\_Handbook\\_1-09-2020.pdf](https://www.tlu.ee/sites/default/files/Instituudid/BFM/Instituut/Tootmise%20vormid/ENG/BFM_Production_Handbook_1-09-2020.pdf)

## **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 needs and specifics of the production. In order to apply for the stipend an Application of Creative Stipend (can be found in BFM's Production Handbook), signed by the Thesis supervisor should be submitted to the programme curator. After discussion and approval of the request by the programme curator the resources will be transferred to the producer's account in two parts: 85% of the sum within 5 working days, and 15% after presenting the final financial report within 5 working days.

## **9. Special Requirements for Thesis Production**

- The students should be involved in the Thesis production in multiple roles accumulating at least 1,5 points according to Table 1.
- The decision regarding the number of students involved into one Thesis production should be approved by the Thesis Committee.
- The actual duration (running time) of Thesis production, the production budget and the needs for hiring crew members (cameramen, editor, sound engineer, lighting engineer etc.) have to be properly discussed with the supervisor, who should endorse the script and the production plan.
- The Digital master copy of the Thesis production has to be in file format that meets the technical requirements stated by the BFM Production Centre. The file has to be stored in BFM storage in time.
- The finalized project Digital master file must be submitted for BFM media archive before the student receives his/her diploma. The technical requirements for the final project master file are described in the BFM Production Handbook (Archiving of Projects).
- The films/programs if made in other languages than English must be subtitled in English.

## 10. The Production Book

Every Thesis Production will be accompanied by one Thesis Book. Depending on the nature of the Thesis Production the Production Book should include:

- a title page
- one-liner or focus (a single line which describes the story);
- synopsis
- list of crew
- history of the project
- description of research
- list of cast or main participants
- budget
- script/storyboard (in case of documentary transcript of the film)
- mood board
- lighting schemes
- colour schemes
- DOP's vision
- sound recording schemes
- implemented sound design concept
- production schedule
- talent releases (contracts); talent releases for non-speaking artists
- location contracts
- location photos
- 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-financiers and/or co-producers if any
- self-evaluations of every student involved in the production team, who is earning the credit according to Table 1.

The Production Book should be submitted in 1 paper copy (one hard-cover copy).

## 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 cannot defend their thesis via Skype or other digital platforms.

The curator of the program is responsible for finding and confirming the reviewer of the production. The written review of the work has to be made available to the defending students at least one day before the defence day.

## 12. Grading

The defence commission has to grade the work and achievement of defending students involved in production according to the Table 1, on the grading scale from A to F, where A stands for “excellent” and “F” for “failed”, more specifically:

- A the student has performed an outstanding work
- B the student has shown very good performance
- C the student has performed well, but there are certain insufficiencies in the details
- D the student has shown satisfactory performance, but there are certain insufficiencies regarding some basics and in details
- E the student has shown weak performance, but has produced a piece still satisfies the minimum level required for passing
- F the student has not produced a satisfactory piece as required.

While grading the production, the commission use following criteria and guidelines:

### **Idea** (20% of the grade):

- originality 1-10
- complexity 1-5
- social or artistic effect 1-5

### **Implementation and execution** (60% of the grade):

- creativity 1-30
- audio-visual quality 1-15
- overall impact 1-15

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

- content of the production book 1-15
- meeting formal requirements of the style and presentation (1-5)

Every involved student is evaluating the effort of his/her teammates as stated in **Evaluation of the Thesis Film Team Members** which can be found here:

<https://www.tlu.ee/en/bfm/studies/documents-and-manuals#audiovisual-media-ba>

The team evaluation results will be considered in formation of the final grade.

Points, given by the members of the defence commission will be summarized and arithmetic mean will be taken. The result of the commission applies to the whole project, particular grades for every team member will be multiplied by the coefficient calculated based on team members' evaluations.

The grades correspond to following points:

A	90-100 points
B	80-89 points
C	70-79 points
D	60-69 points
E	50-59 points
F	49 points or less

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

### **13. Plagiarism**

Plagiarism, i.e. using other people's work and ideas without providing proper academic reference to the original source, thus violating the rights of the original author(s) to their intellectual outputs and/or using one's own previously published work or research results without providing proper academic reference (Tallinn University's Study Regulation § 30 (9) p 5).

Plagiarism or theft of intellectual property is the publishing of another author's research or part of it, under your own name. Plagiarism may also constitute the use of other authors' sentences, thoughts, ideas or data, including electronic and internet sources without proper referencing.

The student shall lose the right to defend the existing thesis in the case of proven plagiarism.

### **14. Contesting the Results of a Bachelor's Thesis**

Based on § 34 of Tallinn University's Study Regulations

Grades of final theses and issues related to the defence procedure may be contested within five working days from the announcement of the results by submitting a written contestation to the Director of the academic unit. The Director of the academic unit shall summon an appeal committee who shall assess the contestation within twelve days. A maximum of one member of the defence committee may

belong to the appeal committee. If the appeal committee does not agree with the decision of the defence committee, the Director of the academic unit shall summon another committee to make a joint decision within three working days. The new committee shall include the members of the defence committee and the appeal committee. The Director of the academic unit shall make a decision that shall be forwarded to the student in writing.

The student has the right to contest decisions within five calendar days of the announcement of the decision of the defence committee by submitting a written contestation to the Director of the academic unit. The Director of the academic unit shall summon an appeal committee consisting of three members. No more than one member of the defence committee may belong to the appeal committee. The appeal committee shall analyse the student's application and the reasoning of the original defence committee. They shall announce their decision to the Director of the academic unit within twelve working days of the submission of the contestation. The Director of the academic unit shall inform the related parties and the defence committee of their decision in writing. If the Director of the academic unit maintains the decision of the defence committee, the Director of the academic unit shall issue a warning to the student, based on the appeal committee's decision and other important circumstances, or initiate the deletion of the student from the matriculation register. In the case of a proposal to delete the student from the matriculation register, the proposal shall be submitted to the Vice-Rector for the field of study together with additional material (the decision of the defence committee, the decision of the appeal committee, evidence, and materials presented by the student). The Vice-Rector for the study field, appointed by the Rector, shall decide on the deletion of the student from the matriculation register on the basis of the presented materials. If the Vice-Rector agrees with the decision of the Director, deletion of the student from the matriculation register due to indecent behaviour shall be initiated and the negative result 'F' shall be marked on the defence protocol. The student shall lose the right to defend the existing thesis in the case of proven plagiarism.

In order to graduate from the university, the student shall write and defend a final thesis on a new topic. If the appeal committee/Director of the academic unit/Vice-Rector decides that disregard of academic practice did not take place, then the student has the right to defend the final thesis within two weeks, on the date given by the chairman of the final thesis committee.

Audio-visual artwork is regulated by the Copyright Act of Estonian Republic and Copyright law of the European Union. The student is obliged to follow afore-mentioned laws.