

CONSOLIDATED TEXT  
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TALLINN UNIVERSITY  
**BALTIC FILM, MEDIA AND ARTS SCHOOL**

GUIDELINES  
for the  
formatting, presentation and defence  
of a MA thesis  
within the Documentary Film curriculum

Tallinn 2022

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## 1. The Work

The MA Thesis Production (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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 the English language at C1 level is required.

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

- submission of the tentative production proposal to the curator of the program September
- tentative script, treatment, budget November
- selection of adviser November
- presentation of the production proposal to the committee December
- registration of the thesis production in the Production Department January
- applying for additional financial resources (if required) February, 3<sup>rd</sup> 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<sup>nd</sup> week
- working on the production book May, 1<sup>st</sup> week
- password protected video link and digital Production Book to the curator of the program May, 3<sup>rd</sup> week
- short resume from opponent May, 4<sup>th</sup> week
- screening and defence of thesis production May, 4<sup>thw</sup>-June 1<sup>stw</sup>
- - 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 Study Information System (ÖIS). 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. The advisers 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 director of BFM 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, step-outline), technical specification (duration, format, and main credit), budget, CV of the director.

Students are pitching the proposal in front of the panel (Committee) who is deciding whether or not the project will be accepted to production. In case the project is not accepted the student will be given 2 (two) weeks to improve the package or pitch another idea. New pitch has to get acceptance from the Committee. Without acceptance from the Committee the student is not accepted to produce the thesis film.

#### **7. Change of the thesis subject**

In order to change the thesis subject the student has to write an application to the curator of the program as well as present a Mini Kit with new proposal. The application has to be supported by student's adviser.

## 8. 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 (<https://www.tlu.ee/en/bfm/about-usbfm-production-centre/production-forms>).

## 9. 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 **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 (Archiving of the 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 digitally.

## 10. The Production Book

The Production Book should include:

- a title page
- logline
- synopsis
- transcript of the film
- director's statement
- history of the project
- description of research
- self-evaluation
- list of crew
- budget
- 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:

Production 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

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.

Appendix 1

## REGISTRATION FOR MASTER'S THESIS

I, \_\_\_\_\_(the student), intend to graduate in June of 2023.

Thesis project

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Preliminary thesis title or topic in English, name of the director*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Supervisor's name and signature*

Approval of the curator of the study programme,  
Riho Västriik  
*(signature)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's e-mail address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's phone no

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**\* Please, type this application up in Word, only then print and bring to N-518. Digital signatures are allowed (even preferred), with applications to be e-mailed to [documentary@tlu.ee](mailto:documentary@tlu.ee)**

**\*\*It is compulsory to fill in all fields!**

Appendix 2

**Author's declaration and non-exclusive licence for the use of the thesis**

I, ..... (name of the student),

1. have compiled the Master's Thesis named in Clause 2 independently. The research of other authors, important opinions from literature and other sources are cited.
2. grant Tallinn University a permit (a non-exclusive licence) without claiming payment of remuneration to:
  - 2.1. reproduce for the purpose of conservation and electronic publication in the repository of Tallinn University Academic Library;
  - 2.2. make public in the repository of Tallinn University Academic Library the following thesis created by me:

*TITLE*

supervised by ..... (name of the supervisor),

3. The permissions granted in Clause 2 shall be given from the evaluation of the thesis with positive result until the term of the protection of copyright.
4. I am aware of the fact that the author also retains the rights mentioned in Clause 2.
5. I certify that granting the non-exclusive licence does not infringe the intellectual property rights of other persons or the rights arising from the legal acts regulating the protection of natural persons upon processing of personal data.

The author of the thesis: ..... (name)

*(digital) signature, date*

The student is allowed to proceed to the defence of the final thesis.

Supervisor: .....(name, academic degree)

*(digital) signature, date*

The public defence of the final thesis will be held in Tallinn, on June ...., 2023, at ... AM at the BFM Documentary Film final thesis defence committee's meeting.