

**HONOURS PROJECT HANDBOOK**

*(2017-2018)*

**ACADEMY OF FILM**

**SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION**

**HONG KONG BAPTIST UNIVERSITY**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The honours project is the culmination of your creative and critical training. It must be prepared and executed with the greatest care and effort. At the end of year 3, you must choose a track for your honours project: production (fiction, non-fiction video/film or animation), scriptwriting (a screenplay) or thesis (a research paper). You will need to prepare a proposal to the Academy for approval.

The proposal will be reviewed by the faculty and the student will be assigned a faculty member to supervise the progression of the project.

The honours project is not only a product of creativity, technical skills and critical thinking, but also an exercise of responsibility, discipline and time/logistical management. Please honor all due dates. You will have plenty of time to complete the project if you work on them in a serious and well-organized manner.

In order to guide you through the process of honours project, this handbook includes major information and regulations. Please read them carefully before you begin. Your supervisor will be happy to help in this important endeavour, so don't be shy of seeking advice.

## QUALIFICATIONS\*

To embark upon your chosen track, you must qualify in different ways.

- Production:

Students who wish to choose the production track are required to have 4 production courses taken at the home institution (from the 8 production options under “Concentration Required Courses”).

- Animation:

- 1) Final grade of B+ is preferred for Digital Animation (FILM3015);
- 2) Completion of Advanced Animation and Special Effects Workshop (FILM4005).

- Scriptwriting:

Completion of Advanced Scriptwriting (FILM 4007) at the home institution.

- Thesis:

Final grade of B or above for the Film and Media Arts Research Methods (FILM 3007).

\* All required course(s) need to be taken at home institution. Those who have waived the required course(s) are not qualified to select the related HP track.

## GENERAL GUIDELINES AND REGULATIONS

### I. Timetable and Deadlines

July	<b>Second Friday:</b> submission of chosen tracks (email reply to the programme)
August	<b>August 20:</b> individual production project proposals due (via email)
September	<b>Second Friday:</b> other proposals due
	<b>Third Friday:</b> release of the list of supervisors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Assignment of supervisors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Each faculty member will supervise no more than 5 projects.</li> <li>ii) Students may nominate up to 2 supervisors in their proposals.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
October	<b>First Monday:</b> revised proposal due (if any)
	<b>Mid October:</b> approval of proposals
	<b>Mid October-30 November:</b> commencement of writing, research (scriptwriting and thesis track) and pre-production planning (for production track)
November	<b>First Friday:</b> last day to apply for switching HP tracks. Strong justification and advisor's approval is required!
December	<b>First week:</b> Production track students need to submit their final production scripts, which will be graded. The grade counts 30% of the final grade. Late scripts will be marked down by 3 points (out of 30) per day. Scriptwriting track students need to submit their scriptwriting proposals (including story outline, description of major characters, and related research on the subject

	<p>matter), which will be graded. The grade counts 30% of the final grade.</p> <p>Thesis track student need to present her or his research project and submit the proposal. The presentation and the proposal will be graded. The grade counts 30% of the final grade.)</p>
	<p><b>First week:</b> principal shooting begins (students are not allowed to borrow any equipment from the technical office without an approval signature from their supervisors and their projects won't be graded even though they use their own equipment to finish them)</p>
January	<p><b>First week:</b> postproduction I (editing) begins</p>
March	<p><b>First week:</b> postproduction II (sound recording and mixing) begins</p>
	<p><b>First week:</b> first draft due (Scriptwriting and Thesis)</p>
April	<p><b>First week:</b> feedback to students (scriptwriting and thesis)</p>
May	<p><b>First Friday:</b> submission due day (all projects)</p>
	<p><b>Second week:</b> screening and grading</p>

Should any of the above due date falls on a public holiday, the due day will be pushed back by one day.

## II. Proposal

Researching and writing for a project proposal for screen production or studies.

- Production / Animation Track (production folder):

- 1) What sort of storytelling? Fiction or non-fiction? Experimental? Animation? What genre? Thriller? Horror? Romance?
- 2) Synopsis: 200 words
- 3) A full script
- 4) Budget
  - ❖ What is the total budget?
  - ❖ What is the breakdown of expenditures?
- 5) Production style
  - ❖ What are the stylistic techniques to be employed?
  - ❖ What is the aesthetic effect to be achieved?
- 6) Pre-production planning
  - ❖ A brief description of key tasks prior to the principle photography such as financing, casting, crew, insurance, catering, etc.
- 7) Post-production planning
  - ❖ A brief description of key tasks after the production such as title, sound mixing, special effects and optical printing / color grading.
- 8) Equipment

▪ Scriptwriting Track (8 – 10 pages):

- 1) Identify the type of the screenplay: Feature film? TV program? Stage?
- 2) Synopsis: 200 words
- 3) Story outline: 1000 words
  - ❖ An extended, detailed description of the project, including a rough structure of the actual screenplay
- 4) Value and significance
  - ❖ The significance of the story
  - ❖ Expected response from readers or production companies
  - ❖ Commercial, educational, artistic value?
- 5) Sample scene breakdown
  - ❖ How many scenes?
  - ❖ Provide a sample scenario, i.e., time, place, action, dialogue and an overall setup
- 6) Work schedule
  - ❖ Number of days involved in researching
  - ❖ Number of days involved in constructing the structure
  - ❖ Number of days involved in drafting, revising and finalizing the screenplay



▪ Thesis Track (10 – 12 pages):

Develop a research question related to film and television studies. Conduct a research on that question and prepare the research prospectus.

1) Cover Page

2) One page abstract

- ❖ Briefly summarize the nature of your study, what the research is about, its objective(s) and the methodology employed

3) Research problem

- ❖ What is the problem, issue, or critical focus to be researched?
- ❖ Any important terms to be defined?
- ❖ What is the significance of the problem?

4) Literature review

- ❖ What does previous research reveal about the different aspects of the problem?
- ❖ What research questions or hypotheses have emerged from the literature review?  
You may establish the significance of your topic by arguing that the research fills a gap in the literature or provide possibility for fruitful exploration.

Tips for writing good literature review

- Cohesive not choppy (Organized by topical order/chronological order/problem-cause-solution order etc)
- The reader should see how the research helps clarify a specific aspect of the problem.

5) Method

- ❖ What is the theoretical or analytical framework for the investigation?
- ❖ What will be used to conduct the research?
- ❖ What are the limitations of this methodology? What sources of bias will exist? How will they be controlled?

6) Chapter outline

7) Working bibliography and filmography/videography

- ❖ Reference list of secondary source (15-20 entries of scholarly and critical relevance) and a list of primary source (e.g. films) useful for the investigation
- ❖ Use either *The MLA Handbook* or *The Chicago Manual of Style* (consult your supervisor for reference)

8) Work schedule

*Possible types of film criticism for your research project (John E. Moscovitz, 2000)*

- Cinematic technique/Cinematic element-driven critique
- The idea/topic-driven critique
- The character/actor/auteur-driven critique
- The movie-to-movie comparative analysis

**Reference and further readings**

Bywater, T. & Sobchack, T. An Introduction to Film Criticism: Major critical Approaches to Narrative Film. New York: Longman, 1989.

Moscovitz, J.E. Critical Approaches to Writing about Film. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2000.

Rubin, R.B., Rubin, A.M., & Piele, L.J. Communication Research: Strategies and Sources. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2000.

### III. Submission

- Due: 5pm, First Friday of May
- Late Policy: If you submit your project after 5pm, first Friday of May, the final grade of your honours project will be marked down by one sub-grade (e.g., from A to A-); projects that are submitted on Saturday (only if Technical Office opens, which is not guaranteed) will be marked down by one letter grade (e.g., from A to B); projects that are submitted on or after Monday will receive an F grade.
- Your work must comply with the following regulations to be accepted.
- Production / Animation Track:

1) Length of the finished project:

- ❖ Video/Film project (Group or individual): 15-30 minutes (+/-10%)
- ❖ Animation project (group or individual): 3 to 5 minutes

Projects exceeding the maximum length will not be accepted for screening or examination.

- 2) English and Chinese subtitles are compulsory.
- 3) A synopsis with no more than 500 words in both Chinese and English.
- 4) 10 selected production stills must be sent to the Photography office at the time of submission (see Appendix 1 for reference).
- 5) Credits: opening, closing credits and acknowledgements to the supervisor and all the other teaching and technical staff members must be inserted at the end of your project, including the HKBU logo. A standardized version is attached for your reference: see Appendix 2.
- 6) Submission to the Technical Office.

- 7) The Public Screening Committee should also collect all final works after the last public screening and send the copies to Academy of Film (Technical Office)
  - 8) All final works will be uploaded to HKBUtube. Those who do not want to do so should write a letter to the secretary of AF explaining the reason(s).
- Scriptwriting and Thesis Track:
- 1) Length: 10000-15000 words
  - 2) Language of writing: Chinese or English
  - 3) All works must be submitted in two hardcopies.
  - 4) Style, cover page, acknowledgements and binding Style: Use MLA, APA or Chicago Manuel Style for citation and documentation (i.e., bibliography, filmography, endnotes etc.). Consult your supervisor as which style to use if necessary.
  - 5) Cover page, acknowledgements and binding: see Appendix 3 (softcopy is available by request [af-fma@hkbu.edu.hk](mailto:af-fma@hkbu.edu.hk) ).
  - 6) Library release form (Appendix 4)
  - 7) Submission to AF office

#### **IV. Grading**

- *Production / Animation Track:*
- An external examination committee composed of 3 members will view and grade projection works. Each committee member will give a preliminary grade to the student after the screening. Then the members will have a meeting / discussion and reach a collective grade. This grade counts 70% of the final grade. Thus the final grade is accumulative and combines the grade from the first semester and the one on the final work. The screening of the project works will be arranged in the second week of May. No grade will be given until the student returns all equipment to the Technical Office. Should there be any loss of or damage to the equipment, students must settle the replacement/repairs before the final grade can be submitted to AR. Students must attend the screening and meet the examination committee. Those who fail to do so without permission from the committee will fail their project.

Rubrics:

- Idea and concept generation - 20%
- Creativity – 30%
- Overall organization of completed artifact, event or program - 20%
- Technical competence - 30%

▪ Scriptwriting or Thesis Track:

An examination committee composed of 2 markers will view and grade the final projects.

Each committee member will give a preliminary grade to the student. Then the members will have a meeting / discussion and reach a collective grade. This grade counts 70% of the final grade. Thus the final grade is accumulative and combines the grade from the first semester and the one on the final work.

Rubrics (Scriptwriting):

- Storytelling – 40%
- Originality and Creativity – 40%
- Technical competence (writing and structure) – 20%

Rubrics (Thesis):

- Research quality – 40%
- Argument/Analysis – 40%
- Writing and format – 20%

## **V. Remarks on Production Track**

- 1) If you return the equipment late, the final grade of your honours project will be marked down by one letter grade (e.g., from A to B) in the first 24 hours, two letter grades between 24 hours and 36 hours, and given an F grade after 36 hours, unless you apply for exemption with strong justification and get approval from the Technical Committee.
- 2) A “Special Request” form for extra shooting quota is available for download at TO website for extending their bookings with reasonable justifications. However, under no circumstances an approval will be given if it will affect other students’ check-out schedule. Students should submit the form to the Technical Committee at least 3 working days before check-out date. For final decision, please contact the Technical Committee.
- 3) Any extension on shooting or change of shooting schedule will not be allowed, if it will affect other students’ shooting schedules, unless you can provide one of the following at least 3 working days ahead of time: a) An email confirmed by the affected students, or b) Telephone confirmation by the affected students, or c) An consensus form signed by affected students.
- 4) Two working days’ notice is required for change of shooting schedule, even if no student will be affected.

- 5) For hard disk space is limited in video editing, any video file stored in hard drive will be subjected to removal by the next group of users of that priority period.
- 6) For safety precaution in the event of computer failure, you are advised to save your project and back up your work on a frequent basis. In the event of computer or hard disk failure unrelated to students' misuse, extra time will be rescheduled for making up the loss hours of usage.
- 7) Under no circumstances may students of the Academy utilize professional crew by financial means on their production projects, except for actors.
- 8) Students may not associate their projects with outside production company, including production and post-production facilities, personnel or funding.
- 9) Students are responsible for clearing video/music copyright used in their film/video prior to screenings.
- 10) Students can book no more than ONE TV studio for Honours Project production shooting and should be under the condition that no other courses will be affected.



## **VI. Remarks on Thesis Track**

- 1) Posing and developing a problem needing a solution (thesis) or an idea to be expressed in either a dramatic (story in a film, commercial, television episode or a screenplay), conceptual (image-sound rendition such as an animation or a music video) or non-fiction (documentary or news report) form.
  - ❖ Make sure what it is that you want to study and express
  - ❖ Choose and narrow your topic, concept and subject matter
  
- 2) Literature review: Reviewing past research/writings (scholarly articles, books and reviews) about that problem and works (films, screenplays, commercials, music videos, TV programs, animations etc.) about that subject or concept.
  - ❖ It helps you to clarify the current state of knowledge about the topic before formulating new research questions or artistic investigation to guide the whole project
  
- 3) Identifying worthy questions, concepts and subject matter that previous investigators, filmmakers and storytellers haven't answered and explored
  - ❖ Suspect the validity of the previous investigations?

- ❖ Any new diversity of knowledge to the problems and concepts addressed?
  - ❖ New information, method or style that may alter previous findings, depictions or storytelling?
- 4) Devising the best method, form or style to seek answers to these questions
    - ❖ The question itself may suggest the most suitable approach
    - ❖ Past research in the literature may also suggest suitable research method
  - 5) Gathering the necessary information to answer the research questions and organize stories, portray characters and situations
  - 6) Analyzing that information to decide whether they are useful to the project
  - 7) Presenting the results of the inquiry by means of writing or image-sound making
  - 8) Considering the meaning and implications of the completed project to further knowledge of the field of screen studies and production.

**\*New Guideline on Production Track**

In order to achieve effective allocation of equipment and resources, the number of students undertaking individual projects per year will be limited to 4 or below. All others should undertake group projects consist of 2-4 students per group. The quota of individual project is implemented based on the following factors: 1) the intake of film student is increasing; 2) limited equipment to cover not only honours projects but also other classes at the same time; 3) high concentration of honours project projections from December to March in the following year.

If the student is interested in undertaking an individual project, she or he has to submit a proposal on or before August 20. Please refer to page 5 of this handbook for the required items of the proposal. Late or incomplete proposals will disqualify automatically. If more than 4 proposals are submitted, a panel will be formed to select 4 proposals. The most important criteria would be the quality of the full script, which counts 80%. Other items in the proposal will also be assessed, which count 20%. GPA will be the ultimate tie breaker. An announcement will be made about successful individual project applications in early September.

This new guideline will be implemented in Academic Year 2017-2018.