

Master of Fine Arts

in Film, Television and Digital Media

MFA Thesis Project Handbook

2024-25 (For all intakes)

Academy of Film
School of Creative Arts
Hong Kong Baptist University

CONTENT

- 1. INTRODUCTION**
- 2. THE MFA THESIS PROJECT**
- 3. SCHEDULE**
 - A. PRODUCTIONS**
 - B. SCRIPT WRITING**
- 4. PROPOSAL PRESENTATION**
- 5. THE PROCESS**
- 6. TECHNICAL SUPPORT**
- 7. FINAL ASSESSMENT**
- 8. PLAGIARISM/ BREACH OF COPYRIGHT**
- 9. COPYRIGHT OWNERSHIP**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Master of Fine Arts in Film, TV and Digital Media is a terminal degree in creative production. In the final year of study, every student must produce an MFA Thesis Project to fulfill the requirement for the completion of the MFA degree.
- 1.2 This Handbook outlines essential guidelines for the preparation documents and production of the MFA Thesis Project.

2. THE MFA THESIS PROJECT

2.1 The MFA Thesis Project must be created during the final year of study. It should be developed from the student's original ideas. Therefore, while existing works may inspire a creation, adaptation is not acceptable under normal circumstances. If a student desires to adapt an existing work with strong justifications, he or she must receive approval from both the Thesis Supervisor and Programme Director in advance under special consideration. The student is fully responsible for the legal consequences of the adaptation. Furthermore, the thesis project must be developed, executed, produced and completed within the Academic Year in which the Thesis courses, CTV7081 MFA Thesis Project I and CTV7082 MFA Thesis Project II, are registered. Unless otherwise consented by Thesis Supervisor, material produced or written prior to the final year of study will not be accepted as part of the Thesis Project.

2.2 Thesis Project carries a total of 9 units and runs across two semesters.

2.3 The MFA Thesis Project should reflect the student's aesthetic sense, cultural sensibility, and display the student's professional competence in a specific area of work.

2.4 The Academy of Film accepts MFA Thesis Projects in the following forms:

- i. Dramatic Film Production;
- ii. Documentary Film Production;
- iii. Digital Media Production;
- iv. Script for Film or Television

2.5 The MFA Thesis Project is a natural development of the student's study.

For 2019-20 intake and onwards, students should complete the following **required courses of the MFA Thesis Project** within whole study period:

Either

a) Thesis delivered as a film production:

CTV7150 Postgraduate Dramatic Film/TV Production

CTV7170 Advanced Dramatic Film/TV Production Workshop

CTV7160 Documentary Film Production Workshop

Or

b) Thesis delivered as a work of scriptwriting:

CTV7110 Advanced Script Writing Workshop

CTV7130 Comedy: Theory and Practice

CTV7440 Television Drama Writing

Or

c) Thesis delivered as a work of digital media:

Either CTV7430 Visual Effects and a non-unit bearing intensive Digital Media Workshop, Or

Two non-unit bearing intensive Digital Media Workshops

2.6 The required length of the MFA Thesis Project is as follows:

- i. Film Production, 20-30 minutes in duration¹;
- ii. Digital Media Productions, an animation film of 3-5 minutes in duration².
Under special circumstances and in consideration of artistic necessity, other durations may be considered;
- iii. Script for Film, approximately 40,000 words (Chinese or English), or when realized, would be a full-length feature film (i.e., approx. 100 minutes in duration);
- iv. Script for Television, an outline of a television series (i.e., at least 13 episodes for magazine or documentary programmes, and 20 episodes for drama), and completed pilot episode(s) of no less than two hours of airtime.

¹*From 2016-2017 intake **and beyond**, students may propose a project in alternative format, duration or combination of manpower, i.e. individual contribution or joint effort. The proposed project must be of similar workload, production scales and technical proficiency as the standard format for consideration. Consent by both the Thesis Supervisor and Program Director must be obtained prior to developing the final Thesis Project Proposal.*

²*Students may propose other forms of Digital Media Production. A consensus between the student, the Creative Advisor and the Thesis Supervisor will determine the form, scale and duration of the project.*

2.7 Submission requirements for Thesis Project Proposal (1st semester) for Proposal Presentation includes:

A. Productions

- i. For animation and drama production, the proposal folder should consist of a synopsis, scene breakdown, characterization, a statement of original intent (of the plot, characters and the creator) and a **Final Full Script**.
- ii. For documentary production, a description on the subject matter and style, justifications of creating a documentary on the subject matter—possible angles and issues to be derived from the process, a tentative structure of the film, detailed research report on related matters.
- iii. For all productions, additional information related to the project may also be included e.g., research and supporting material, reference images and music, and sample talent and locations, etc.

B. Script Writing

The proposal folder should consist of a synopsis, treatment, logline, characterization, character relationship diagram, detailed scene breakdown and available research material on the subject matter.

2.8 Submission requirements of the MFA Thesis Project (2nd semester) for Thesis Project Final Assessment include:

A. Productions

- i. A final assessment folder should consist of a synopsis, treatment, a statement of original intent (of the plot, characters and the creator), production credits, and 10 production still photographs with captions; 10 screen captures, and copyright information (intellectual property origins—idea inspirations, music, trademarks, talent and location releases, etc.)
- ii. A copy of the completed MFA Thesis Film with both Chinese and English subtitles on Blu-ray disc, and computer file format. (Technical specifications will be announced in due course)
- iii. All written material must be typed and saved as an MS Word document, and should meet professional writing standards.
- iv. Student's final production should include the following items in order:

- 1) AF motion logo
- 2) Opening Screen
- 3) Short Video/Film (with both Chinese and English subtitles)
- 4) Credits (list of director, script writer, crew members, etc.)
- 5) Acknowledgement - could include all full-time academic staff, full-time supporting staff and HP Supervisor (Take note of your typos!!) (Please go to AF homepage for the updated information)
- 6) The message below after acknowledgement
 “This production is a thesis project submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of Fine Arts degree in Film, Television and Digital Media of the Academy of Film, Hong Kong Baptist University.”
- 7) Ending Screen

B. Script Writing

- i. A final assessment folder should consist of a cover page, a statement of original intent of the plot, characters and the creator, logline, synopsis, treatment, characterization, character relationship diagram, detailed scene breakdown, a full script and available research material, presentation artwork and film poster, etc.
- ii. Three hard copies of the MFA Thesis Project with proper binding; one digital soft copy.
- iii. All written material must be typed and saved as an MS Word document, and should meet professional writing standards.

3. SCHEDULE

Typically, there are several **steps towards the completion of a Thesis Project**.

1. Submission of 1st stage of creative ideas and reference material
2. Submission of final written material
3. Approval by Thesis Supervisor
4. Approval of Panel of Proposal Presentation
5. Submission of work in progress
6. Approval from Creative Advisor and Thesis Supervisor on the final version of the Thesis Project
7. Submission of final version of the Thesis Project
8. Thesis Project Assessment & Oral Defense

In the process of completing the Thesis Projects, the following deadlines will be strictly enforced. **Failure to meet the submission deadlines of finished thesis proposal and thesis project will be given a F grade in Thesis Project.**

Only one panel assessment will be offered. No further panel assessments will be granted unless there are appropriate reasons, in which case one additional assessment may be allowed subject to approval by the Programme and the Academy.

Students are fully responsible for observing all deadlines, without reminders from faculty or staff.

A. Schedule for Productions

No.	Action	Deadline/ Timeline*	Submit to#	Remarks
1	Submission of story ideas	3 p.m., last Friday of August	1. Creative Advisor 2. Thesis Supervisor	No less than three preliminary story ideas
2	Submission of story outline	3 p.m., 16 September	1. Creative Advisor 2. Thesis Supervisor	An in-depth subject matter study, and a detailed story outline
3	Submission of first draft of script	3 p.m., second Friday of October	1. Creative Advisor 2. Thesis Supervisor 3. Programme Office	1. <u>Film and Animation production</u> : script should include a synopsis, a treatment, and a description of main characters 2. <u>Documentary production</u> : a description of the subject matter to be shot, compiled, or re-enacted; and structure of the documentary film conceived 3. Creative Advisor’s approval of the draft of script is required
4	Submission of Proposal	3 p.m., 15th November	1. Creative Advisor 2. Thesis Supervisor 3. Programme Office	1. Refer to point 2.7 of this Handbook for specific requirements 2. Thesis Supervisor’s approval of the Proposal is required *Failing to meet this deadline will lead to F grade in CTV7081 MFA Thesis Project I

No.	Action	Deadline/ Timeline*	Submit to#	Remarks
5	Proposal Presentation	Late November to early December	n/a	Refer to point 4 of this Handbook. Student's physical presence required
6	Submission of rough production material or writing work in progress	3 p.m., last Friday of March	1. Creative Advisor 2. Thesis Supervisor	Include camera footage and rough-cut, low-res render, etc. of the thesis film
7	Submission of finished Thesis Project to Thesis Supervisor and Creative Advisor for Approval	3 p.m., 11 th April	1. Creative Advisor 2. Thesis Supervisor	1. Finished Thesis Project in digital file 2. Creative Advisor's approval is required
8	Submission of finished MFA Thesis Project to Assessment Panel	3 p.m., 2nd May	AF Technical Office	1. Must submit all documents listed in point 2.8. Also submit a low-res digital file of the film or online link to the Thesis Supervisor 2. Prior approval from Creative Advisor and Thesis Supervisor is required *Failing to meet this deadline will lead to F grade in CTV7082 MFA Thesis Project II
9	Final Assessment (screening) and Oral Defense	Around first two weeks of May	n/a	Student's physical presence required

* In case the deadline falls on the weekend or a public holiday, it will be moved to the next working day.

#Creative Advisor will be responsible for giving professional suggestions, while Thesis Supervisor will oversee students' progress of creative work throughout the Thesis Project.

B. Schedule for Script Writing

No.	Action	Deadline/ Timeline*	Submit to#	Remarks
1	Submission of creative framework	3 p.m., 10 th October	1. Creative Advisor 2. Thesis Supervisor	1. The proposal should include a concrete story to be depicted with audio-visual language; and a description of the major characters. 2. Creative Advisor’s approval is required
2	Submission of Proposal	3 p.m., 15th November	1. Creative Advisor 2. Thesis Supervisor 3. Programme Office	1. Refer to point 2.7 for specific requirements 2. Thesis Supervisor’s approval of the Proposal is required *Failing to meet this deadline will lead to F grade in CTV7081 MFA Thesis Project I
3	Proposal Presentation	Late November to early December	n/a	Refer to point 4 of this Handbook. Student’s physical presence required
4	Submission of work in progress	3 p.m., last Friday of February	1. Creative Advisor 2. Thesis Supervisor	Various drafts, individual scenes with dialogue, etc.
5	Submission of finished Thesis Project to Thesis Supervisor and Creative Advisor for Approval	3 p.m., 27 th March	1. Creative Advisor 2. Thesis Supervisor	1. Finished Thesis Project 2. Creative Advisor’s approval is required

No.	Action	Deadline/ Timeline*	Submit to#	Remarks
6	Submission of finished MFA Thesis Project to Assessment Panel	3 p.m., 17th April	1. Creative Advisor 2. Thesis Supervisor 3. Programme Office	1. Must submit all documents listed in point 2.8. 2. Prior approval from Creative advisor and Thesis Supervisor is required *Failing to meet this deadline will lead to F grade in CTV7082 MFA Thesis Project II
7	Final Assessment	Late April - early May	n/a	Assessors normally review the thesis scripts and give their feedback in 3-4 weeks

* In case the deadline falls on the weekend or a public holiday, it will be moved to the next working day.

Creative Advisor will be responsible for giving professional suggestions, while Thesis Supervisor will oversee students' progress of creative work throughout the Thesis Project.

4. PROPOSAL PRESENTATION (SEMESTER 1)

4.1 An Assessment Panel will evaluate the Proposal of MFA Thesis Project. It serves as a gatekeeper to ensure a Thesis Project is up to certain standards of professional and postgraduate level. The Assessment Panel will grant formal Proposal Approval to students who have satisfied all the requirements, including a satisfactory Proposal Presentation. Disapproved Proposals will not receive a passing grade for the course MFA Thesis Project I, nor will it be allowed to proceed to production.

4.2 Formation of Assessment Panel

4.2.1 The MFA Thesis Project will be evaluated by an Assessment Panel, consisting of two to four members, normally three members.

4.2.2 The Assessment Panel for Proposal Presentation in the first semester shall be comprised of:

- i. No less than one professional from the film/TV or creative media industry.

4.3 Presentation

- i. Students will formally present the ideas and creative treatment of their MFA Thesis Project in front of the Assessment Panel on the Proposal Presentation Day, usually scheduled in late November to early December.
- ii. The presentation should be clear and concise, in the language both the supervisor and the students deem fit. Each presentation should last for 15 minutes, including questions and answers. The students should clarify any doubt about their work the assessors may have and collect revision instructions in the session.
- iii. Students are encouraged to attend their fellow schoolmates' presentations.

4.4 Scope of Evaluation

Evaluation of proposal will be based on the performance in the following areas:

- i. Originality and Creativity;
- ii. Structure, Form and Expression;
- iii. Technicality and Executability;
- iv. Distribution and Competition Potentials.

4.5 Approval and Grading

- i. The Assessment Panel will approve or disapprove a Thesis Project Proposal based on the quality of work in the areas stipulated in 4.4 by consensus. Disapproved proposals are entitled to one revision. Students with disapproved proposals will revise the work based on assessors' comments and resubmit for reassessment.
- ii. Thesis supervisor will grade the approved Thesis Project Proposal, based on rubrics. However, the grading of a Thesis Project should be consistent with the decisions of the Assessment Panel.
- iii. The workflow, i.e. meeting all deadlines in point 3 "Schedule" and compliance to point 5 "The Process" of this Handbook, will constitute 25% while the quality of final work will constitute 75% of final grade of the course MFA Thesis Project I.
- iv. Resubmitted proposals, albeit eventually approved, shall lose points in Schedule and Process, and hence automatically receive a lower grade.

- v. When panel members are split in their vote to approve, the Thesis Supervisor's vote will count as the final decision.
- vi. No thesis productions, script writing included, shall proceed without Proposal Approval.

4.6 Revision and Resubmission

- i. The Assessment Panel members will be reminded to clearly state their concrete comments in the presentation process, especially the instructions for tangible revision and improvements. However, it is the student's responsibility to take notes and to understand the assessors' revision instructions during the Presentation.
- ii. Revision will be resubmitted to the assessors for reassessment within a specified time by means MFA Programme deems appropriate.

4.7 Failing the Thesis Project Proposal

- i. Failing to submit proposal for approval, late submission, incomplete proposal, using plagiarised material and other special cases such as sloppy proposals, both creatively and clerically, will result in automatic disapproval and subject to retaking the course MFA Thesis Project I.
- ii. Revision failing to get eventual approval before the time limit will also result in retaking of the Thesis course.
- iii. In all above scenarios, students will receive an F grade for MFA Thesis Project I and repeat the studies. Students who retake the Thesis course may choose a completely different topic or subject matter for Thesis if they so desires, subject to Programme Director's approval.

4.8 Appeal

Students who are not satisfied with the final result of the Assessment may appeal through the Grade Appeal channel set forth by the Academic Registry of the Hong Kong Baptist University within two weeks after the course grades are released.

5. THE PROCESS

5.1 The Programme Director will assign to each student a Thesis Supervisor, who is usually a faculty member of the Academy and has professional knowledge in a particular media form.

5.2 The Thesis Supervisor will monitor the progress of students' creative work, coordinate their learning and arrange appropriate Creative Advisor to give advice regarding students' scripts or production plans. The Thesis Supervisor may also take up the role of Creative Advisor when deemed appropriate.

5.3 The creative process of the MFA Thesis Project is motivated by the student, with the supervision of the Thesis Supervisor and the advice of the Creative Advisor on script and production plan.

5.4 The student is responsible for generating a feasible project idea, devising a production plan according to schedule, and eventually materialising the Thesis Project in the prescribed timeframe.

5.5 Students are obliged to meet their Thesis Supervisor regularly and, with the

assistance of the Creative Advisor, come up with the first draft of the script or other required materials as stated in this Handbook or suggested by the Thesis Supervisor.

- 5.6** Thesis Supervisors may require students to report the progress verbally, audio-visually, or through written means.
- 5.7** The final submitted Thesis Project should be derived from the approved proposal in the first semester, otherwise, the Programme Director has the right to remove the submission from the Final Assessment or nullify the Assessment results. Completed Thesis Project deviating significantly from the approved Proposal will be disqualified from Final Assessment.
- 5.8** The final Thesis Project must obtain the approval from the Creative Advisor and the Thesis Supervisor before submitting it to Final Assessment panel in 2nd semester of final study year

6. TECHNICAL SUPPORT

- 6.1** The Academy of Film, Master of Fine Arts programme will provide the majority of equipment necessary for production (i.e., shooting and editing) in Hong Kong.
- 6.2** AF Technical Office will oversee all equipment check out and return matters.
- 6.3** Students should follow the guidelines of the Technical Office set by the AF Technical Committee.

7. FINAL ASSESSMENT (SEMESTER 2)

7.1 An Assessment Panel will evaluate the final completed version of MFA Thesis Project. It serves as a gatekeeper to ensure a Thesis Project is up to certain standards of professional and postgraduate level. Disapproved Thesis Projects will not receive a passing grade for the course MFA Thesis Project II, nor satisfy the requirement for graduation.

7.2 Formation of Assessment Panel

7.2.1 The MFA Thesis Project will be evaluated by an Assessment Panel, consisting of two to four members, normally three members.

7.2.2 The Assessment Panel for Final Assessment and Oral Defense in second semester shall be comprised of:

No less than one professional from the film/TV or creative media industry.

The Programme Director is responsible for appointing members of the Assessment Panel, explaining the evaluation guidelines and making final decisions in case of disagreements among assessors.

Students may offer suggestions to the Programme Director regarding membership of the Assessment Panel.

7.3 Assessment

A. For Productions:

A formal screening of the thesis film will be held for the Assessment Panel, usually scheduled in the first two weeks of May, followed by an oral defense of approximately 15 minutes in duration, in the language both the supervisor and student deem fit. The students should clarify any doubt about their work the assessors may have and collect

revision instructions in the session.

B. For Script Writing:

Thesis script will be forwarded to the Assessors individually for their comments.

7.4 Scope of Evaluation

The Assessment Panel will evaluate the quality of the final work. Evaluation of the MFA Thesis project stresses on the following areas:

For Film Production and Digital Media Creation—

- i. Idea Originality and Creativity
- ii. Narrative Legibility
- iii. Ability to Reflect Original Intent
- iv. Technical Craftsmanship
- v. Execution—Directing Skills
- vi. Creative Use of Cinematic Form and Style

For Script Writing—

- i. Idea Originality and Creativity
- ii. Story Structure and Plot Development
- iii. Dramatic Action
- iv. Characterization
- v. Dialogue and Scene Design
- vi. Creative Use of Cinematic Form and Style

7.5 Approval and Grading

- i. The Assessment Panel will approve or disapprove a Thesis Project based on the quality of work in the areas stipulated in 7.4 by consensus. Unapproved Thesis Projects are entitled to one revision, subject to grade submission deadline of the Academic Registry and may cause delayed graduation. Students with an unapproved project will revise the work based on the assessors' comments and resubmit for reassessment.
- ii. Thesis Supervisor will grade the approved Thesis Project, based on rubrics. However, the grading of a Thesis Project should be consistent with the decisions of the Assessment Panel.
- iii. The workflow, i.e. meeting all deadlines in point 3 "Schedule" and compliance to point 5 "The Process" of this Handbook, will constitute 25% while the quality of final work will constitute 75% of final grade of the course MFA Thesis Project II.
- iv. Resubmitted Thesis Projects, albeit eventually approved, shall lose points in Schedule and Process, and hence automatically receive a lower grade.
- v. When panel members are split in their vote to approve, the Thesis Supervisor's vote will count as the final decision.

7.6 Revision and Resubmission

- i. The Assessment Panel members will be reminded to clearly state their concrete comments in the assessment process, especially instructions for tangible revision and improvements. However, it is the student's responsibility to take notes and to understand the assessors' revision instructions in their communication with the assessors.
- ii. Revision will be resubmitted to the assessors for reassessment within a

specified time by means the MFA Programme deems appropriate.

- iii. Students who need to revise the Project and resubmit for approval may not be able to meet the normal graduation deadline.

7.7 Failing the Thesis Project

- i. Non-submission or late submission of the Thesis Project for assessment will automatically result in failing of the course CTV7082 MFA Thesis Project II of the academic year. Special cases such as plagiarism, intentional cheating, deliberate negligence and sloppiness, using material produced or written outside the Thesis courses without prior consent, or serious deviation from the Approved Proposal, etc. could result in directly failing of MFA Thesis Project II without going through the Final Assessment process.
- ii. The revised Thesis Project failing to get approval from the Assessment Panel will result in failing of MFA Thesis Project II.
- iii. Students involved in any of the above scenarios will not be able to graduate within the normal three-year study term. Subject to the approval of Programme Director and the Academic Registry, students can retake the thesis course(s) at their own cost in new academic year. The MFA Programme determines the schedule of course(s) to be retaken.
- iv. Students who fail the thesis course may choose to create an entirely new project and go through the assessment process all over again in the subsequent year, subject to Programme Director's approval.

7.8 Appeal

Students who are not satisfied with the final result of the Final Assessment may appeal through the Grade Appeal channel set forth by the Academic Registry of the Hong Kong Baptist University within two weeks after the course grades are released.

8. PLAGIARISM/BREACH OF COPYRIGHT

8.1 Any un-credited resemblance of other people's work will be looked at as a basis of plagiarism, which is considered a major misconduct and violation by the Academy. It will lead to disqualification of the Thesis Project, and even dismissal of the student.

8.2 Students are fully responsible for clearing copyrights of material used in their thesis films, such as music, images, footage, trademarks, labels, etc. Students are also responsible for obtaining releases for talent and locations used in their thesis films ensuring that the completed films are "releasable". Any authorized use of image, music and footage must be credited. Students will be held liable for copyright infringement.

9. COPYRIGHT OWNERSHIP

Students and the Academy of Film jointly own the copyright to students' Thesis projects. For details, please refer to the Guidelines to the Copyright of Students' Final Year Project (Distribution via email).