



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

Graduate Program Handbook - 2026/27

Feature Film Production, MFA

Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Reference this handbook to learn about the unique policies, requirements, procedures, resources, and norms for graduate students in the *Feature Film Production, MFA*

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	1
<i>How to Use This Handbook</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Who to Contact for Questions</i>	<i>2</i>
Graduate Program Staff	2
Coordinator of Graduate Studies.....	3
Graduate School Services	3
<i>Onboarding</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Complete Name of Degree</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>College.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Department.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Program Type.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Program Website</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Year of Program Inception.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Program Overview Narrative.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Student Learning Outcomes/Competencies.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Advising/Mentoring.....</i>	<i>6</i>
Finding & Selecting an Advisor	6
Changing Your Advisor.....	7
<i>Program Costs and Fees</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Program Assessment.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>How to Get Involved.....</i>	<i>8</i>
In Our Discipline	8
<i>Admission Requirements</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Degree Requirements.....</i>	<i>11</i>
Narrative, Documentary, or Experimental Modalities.....	12
Electives.....	12
Current Curriculum	12
<i>Independent Study and Directed Research.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Criteria for Internship</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Thesis Hours</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Film Equipment and Editing Facilities & Greenlight.....</i>	<i>16</i>

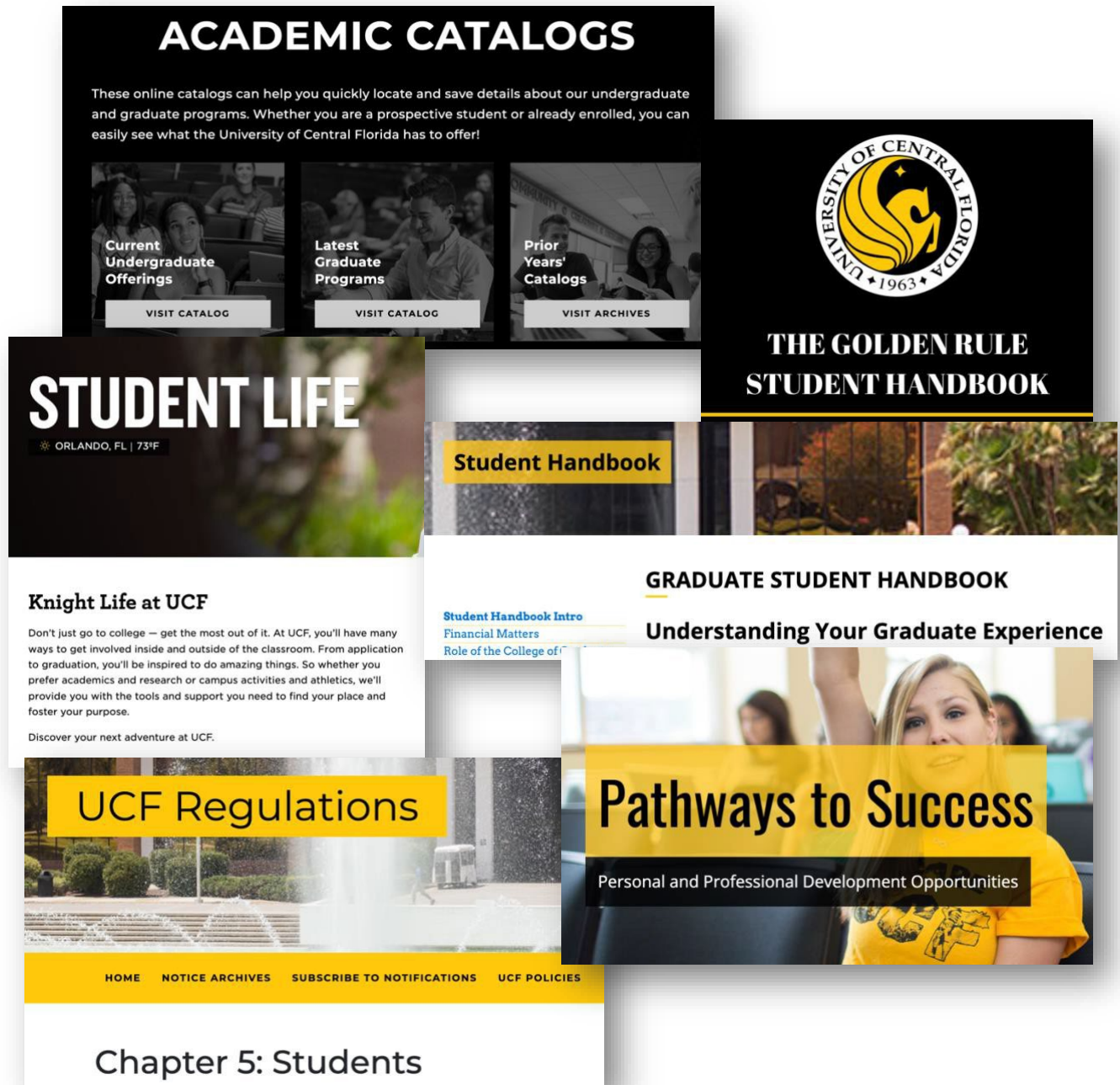
<i>Completion Timeline</i>	17
<i>MFA Production Timeframe</i>	19
<i>Statement of Graduate Research</i>	19
<i>Master of Fine Arts Thesis – Overview</i>	20
<i>Master of Fine Arts Thesis – Committees</i>	20
Selecting Committee Members	20
<i>Thesis Proposal Presentation and Final Defense - Overview</i>	21
Risk Management and Insurance	22
Deadline for Summer Production	22
<i>Format of the Thesis Proposal PDF</i>	23
Submitting the Initial Thesis Proposal PDF Document	24
Thesis Proposal Presentation.....	26
<i>Evaluating the Thesis Proposal</i>	27
The Script, Treatment, or Conceptual Approach	28
The Budget and Schedule	28
Thesis Advisory Committee Recommendation	29
<i>Thesis Film Production</i>	30
<i>Financing the Thesis Film Production</i>	30
<i>Production Meeting</i>	30
<i>Production Forms</i>	31
<i>Tech Scout</i>	31
<i>Set Protocol</i>	31
<i>Intimacy Coordination</i>	31
<i>Visits to the Set</i>	32
<i>Reports</i>	32
Electronic Thesis – Overview	32
<i>Electronic Thesis – Form and Content</i>	32
<i>University Thesis/Dissertation Requirements</i>	35
Final MFA Thesis Defense	35
Thesis Film and Dissertation – Submission	37
Electronic Thesis Dissertation (ETD)	37
Requirements for the Film Submission.....	38
<i>Special Leave of Absence</i>	41

<i>Academic Standards/Conduct/Integrity</i>	41
<i>Accommodations</i>	42
<i>Academic Integrity (RCR) Training Requirements</i>	42
<i>Grad Launch: Required Graduate Orientation Modules</i>	42
<i>Assessment of Progress at MFA Critiques</i>	43
Course Attendance	43
Academic Probation	43
Program Expulsion.....	43
<i>Appeals/Grievances</i>	44
<i>Classroom/Laboratory Use</i>	44
Film Operations	44
Equipment and Facilities.....	45
<i>Communication</i>	45
<i>Continuous Enrollment</i>	46
<i>Nondiscrimination & Accommodations Compliance</i>	46
<i>Enrollment in Thesis Hours</i>	47
<i>Golden Rule</i>	47
<i>University Policy 4-412 Student Academic Appeals</i>	48
<i>Grading and Grading Procedures</i>	48
<i>Harassment</i>	48
<i>International Students</i>	49
<i>Academic Integrity</i>	49
<i>Time Limits to Degree Completion</i>	49
<i>Transfer Credit</i>	49
<i>Review for Original Work (Ithenticate)</i>	49
<i>Financial Aid Funding</i>	51
<i>Graduate Assistantship Details</i>	52
<i>Financial Support Requirements</i>	53
<i>Graduate Presentation Fellowships</i>	53
<i>Graduate Student Associations</i>	53
<i>Professional Development</i>	53
The Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning	53
Pathways to Success Workshops.....	54
Student Research Week/Student Scholar Symposium.....	54

Job Search	54
<i>Graduate Student Center</i>	54
<i>Forms</i>	55
<i>Graduate Excellence Awards</i>	55
<i>Useful Links/Resources</i>	56
<i>Film Graduate Faculty</i>	57

Navigating Policy and Resources at the University of Central Florida

This handbook is one of many sources to consult as you become familiar with the policies, procedures, requirements, resources, and norms of graduate education at the University of Central Florida.



How to Use This Handbook

Together, the [Graduate Student Handbook](#) and your graduate program handbook should serve as your main guide throughout your graduate career. The Graduate Student Handbook includes university information, policies, requirements and guidance for all graduate students. Your program handbook describes the details about graduate study and requirements in your specific program. While both of these handbooks are wonderful resources, know that you are always welcome to talk with faculty and staff in your program and in the College of Graduate Studies.

The central activities and missions of a university rest upon the fundamental assumption that all members of the university community conduct themselves in accordance with a strict adherence to academic and scholarly integrity. As a graduate student and member of the university community, you are expected to display the highest standards of academic and personal integrity.

Here are some resources to help you better understand your responsibilities:

- [Academic Honesty](#)
- [Academic Integrity Training](#) - Open to all graduate students at no cost
- [Plagiarism](#)

Who to Contact for Questions

Many of your questions about how to meet expectations and thrive as a graduate student will be answered by the various sources of policies, procedures, requirements, resources, and norms listed in this document. Several key positions in this department and on campus are ready to answer your remaining questions:

Graduate Program Staff

The Graduate Student Services Coordinator is a staff person who serves as a point person for program policy and procedures. They are well versed in most elements of graduate education that extend beyond academic instruction in your program and will likely be your first stop for questions related to anything in this handbook. For questions related to the Feature Film M.F.A. degree please contact:

- Michael Haney
Graduate Student Service Coordinator
Email: nicholsongrad@ucf.edu
Location: CMB 202A

Coordinator of Graduate Studies

Each graduate program has one faculty member designated to direct its educational vision and structure. For questions related to the Feature Film M.F.A. degree please contact:

- Zachary Beckler
Associate Lecturer in Film, Film and Mass Media
Email: zachary.beckler@ucf.edu
Phone: N/A
Location: NSC 217

Graduate School Services

For general graduate inquiries and graduate student services from the Graduate School, please review the [College of Graduate Studies](#) website as an additional resource.

Onboarding

All incoming students will need to attend and participate in at least two orientations in August of their first year. A program orientation will be held by the faculty graduate coordinator. Students should also complete the Graduate College orientation that is offered online. All students with Graduate Teaching Assistantships must complete required training by the deadlines set forth by the Graduate College.

Introduction/Overview Section

Complete Name of Degree

Feature Film Production

College

College of Sciences

Department

Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Program Type

Master of Fine Arts

Program Website

<https://communication.ucf.edu/degree/film-production-mfa/>

Year of Program Inception

2005

Program Overview Narrative

The MFA in Feature Film Production is a terminal degree, for filmmakers and film artists qualifying you for many university faculty positions in film and media production. It is a highly selective and rigorous film production program for film practitioners and visual artists who demonstrate a commitment to the expressive potential of digital filmmaking and the exploration of non-traditional modes of distribution. The MFA in Feature Film Production produces graduates with mastery of storytelling through cinema as it encourages the candidate to find his or her personal style. The program emphasizes story, performance, aesthetic choice, business, and creative thinking. The program develops graduates who can compete in the worlds of national and international independent filmmaking.

The program is designed to present you with the challenges facing any independent filmmaker and to give you the foundational tools available to meet those challenges. In addition, the program requires the full application of your creative energies by limiting your choice of materials and the size of your budget. How you meet these challenges will be the true measure of your achievement in the program, and the information you gain will serve you well as you apply them throughout your career. Our faculty are experienced in film production and cinema studies. Their understanding of independent film and micro-budget production gives the program a strong combination of intellectual and professional rigor. They are eager to work with you, to share their experience, and to learn from yours. You will find their commitment to you and your work to be exacting in standards, compassionate in understanding and supportive in problem solving.

The MFA in Feature Film Production is a cohort-style program and students must progress through the program by taking required classes in particular semesters. The program requires a minimum of 58 credit hours, including 39 required credit hours, 6 internal credit hours, 3 external credit hours, and 10 credit hours devoted to the thesis project. *This is not an online degree program.*

Student Learning Outcomes/Competencies

Students will select a modality for their thesis film during their first two semesters in the program. While students may make a thesis film outside the narrative feature film model, all MFA candidates must take the core required courses that teach the customs and skills required of the narrative model. Upon completion of the degree, each narrative and documentary student will have produced a microbudget (<\$50,000) digital feature film. Each experimental student will have produced a feature length film or a long-form equivalent body of work. In addition, students working in all modalities will prepare a marketing strategy for the film's distribution and exhibition. Budgetary limitations are encouraged in order to move students away from more traditional modes of production toward an approach that minimizes crew size, cast size, shooting time and production costs in favor of more careful planning, more personal filmmaking and more creative use of the means of production.

The thesis film requires intensive applied learning to be completed as a feature length project or equivalent body of work. Additionally, the thesis project has a strong research component both in the initial development phase and in the creation of the distribution and marketing plan for the project. This final stage of the curriculum serves as a bridge to the professional world and supports the entrepreneurial philosophy of the program.

Advising/Mentoring

Advising relationships are a central part of academia, important to both the experience and development of students and faculty members alike.

Your advisor has two main roles: 1) To assist you in acquiring the highest possible level of knowledge and competence in the field, and 2) to chair the committee that will determine whether you have performed at an acceptable level in each of your degree milestones. Other roles of your advisor may include tracking your progress in completing your degree, assisting with course selection and planning your academic path, and helping you identify possible research mentors, committee members, and research opportunities.

Both the student and advisor are responsible for making their expectations clear to each other. Be sure to discuss this with your advisor.

Finding & Selecting an Advisor

Your advisor should be a faculty member in the program whose expertise and project/research interests match closely with those that you intend to acquire. To learn more about the faculty in your program, consider consulting the following sources:

- Courses and seminars you attend
- Our program website (<https://communication.ucf.edu/degree/film-production-mfa/>)
- Faculty publications and films

Additionally, you may wish to have a discussion with a prospective advisor. Below are some questions to consider asking in this discussion, though it is not a complete list. You should spend some time identifying what is most important to you in your graduate training and ask questions accordingly.

Questions to Ask of Prospective Advisors

- In general, how available will you be to answer questions I might have?
- What is your philosophy regarding the amount of guidance the advisor should provide to a student during preparation of the thesis proposal presentation, film pre-production, production, post-production, thesis writing, etc.?
- What are your expectations for the time I should spend each day/week working?

- Do you include your graduate students in professional activities that will familiarize them with their field of interest/research, such as meeting with visiting speakers and filmmakers and in conference activities?
- How long do you think it should take me to get my degree?
- What are your former graduate students (if any) doing now?
- What is your general philosophy of graduate training and what goals do you have for your graduate students?

Students should select a Thesis Advisor during their second full-time semester in the program. This individual must be someone on the approved graduate faculty list for the Department for Film and Mass Media programs, found online in the Graduate Catalog listed under the [Graduate Faculty](#) section. The Thesis Advisor will chair the Thesis Advisory Committee and must have a terminal degree. Before undertaking the thesis project, the Thesis Advisor must agree to serve in this capacity for the student. No faculty member is obligated to accept a student's request to serve as advisor, though invitations are often accepted unless the faculty member judges that a different advisor would serve your needs better. Please consult with the NSCM Graduate Student Services Coordinator if you have any questions about electing a Thesis Advisor (nicholsongrad@ucf.edu).

The Thesis Advisor works with the student to begin focusing on the thesis film project. The Thesis Advisor serves as a mentor, providing guidance on research and development of the thesis film project, the written Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD), course selection, meeting various benchmarks, and other areas of academic and professional interest. It is important to secure a Thesis Advisor early in the program.

Changing Your Advisor

As the advisor-student relationship is one of mutual agreement, it may be terminated by either party. If you decide that you would prefer working with a different advisor, discuss this with your prospective advisor to seek the change.

If you or your advisor choose to terminate the advisor-student relationship, contact the faculty graduate coordinator as soon as possible. You must then fill out a new committee form with updated committee signatures.

Program Costs and Fees

Students in the Feature Film Production MFA program pay a \$90 equipment fee each semester that they are enrolled. Courses containing a production element may charge

an additional materials and equipment fee. This fee is in addition to any college or university fees.

Program Assessment

The MFA Reviews, held at the end of the fall and spring, serve as an assessment of individual students' progress on their thesis films as well as of the program as measured by students' progress. During the reviews, Film Graduate faculty fill out surveys assessing the quality and quantity of students' work, which is compiled into an annual program assessment report. Numerical evaluations are aggregated for these internal assessment purposes. In these surveys, faculty also write comments addressed to each student, which you will receive after the critique.

How to Get Involved

As a graduate student at UCF, you have a multitude of opportunities to become involved on campus and in your academic discipline. This involvement often enhances your academic, professional, and personal growth through developing advanced leadership, communication, and collaboration skills. It also provides opportunities for professional networking.

In Our Discipline

MFA students interested in teaching are encouraged to join and participate in The [University Film and Video Association](#) (UFVA). Several faculty are actively involved and attend its annual conference. Conference panels, screenings, and workshops, provide opportunities to develop teaching and filmmaking skills and to network with other graduate students and professors.

Curriculum Section

Admission Requirements

For information on general UCF graduate admissions requirements that apply to all prospective students, please visit the [Admissions](#) section of the Graduate Catalog. Applicants must [apply online](#). All requested materials must be submitted by the established deadline. Preference will be given to applicants who can demonstrate a strong production background by including evidence they have been the creative leader of completed short films.

In addition to the general UCF graduate application requirements, applicants to this program must provide:

- One official transcript from each college/university attended.
- A BA or BFA in film production is preferred, however, degrees in the following areas are acceptable *if accompanied by a strong video portfolio*:
 - Animation
 - Art
 - Cinema Studies
 - Communication
 - English/Creative Writing
 - Game Design
 - Graphic Design
 - Illustration
 - Journalism
 - Photography
 - Radio/TV
- The GRE is not required for admission to this program.
- Personal Statement: In 750-words or less, provide an Artist's Statement that reflects your vision for a feature film, or equivalent body of cinematic work, that explains your preliminary plans for raising funds to support your microbudget production. Please describe how the critical thinking and technical expertise acquired in our program will support the successful execution of your vision.
- **Portfolio**: Submit 1 - 3 complete short films (each being 15 minutes or less) that the applicant has participated in as a principle creative collaborator (i.e. as writer, director, producer, director of photography, production designer, and/or editor).
 - Provide a document with links to YouTube, Vimeo, or similar platform.
 - All submitted online links to film samples must include:

- The film's title
 - The applicant's role in the making of the film
 - The date the film was completed
- Other materials in the portfolio may include, but are not limited to:
 - Screenwriting samples, photography, documentation of work in other media, critical media analysis, and any other materials which reflect the applicant's experience with moving image scholarship and practice
- **Writing Sample:** Please submit one of the following writing samples for the film modality you wish to complete. *Admitted students may change modalities ONLY during their first two semesters of the program.*
 - Narrative Feature Film:
 - Provide a detailed written treatment for a proposed feature film.
 - Provide a script sample of another work that he/she has written.
 - The applicant does not have to be the author of the script that he/she plans to direct as the thesis film if accepted into the program. Students may use a script that is in the public domain and direct his/her interpretation of it, or someone else may write a script that the student will direct.
 - Documentary Feature Film:
 - Provide a detailed written treatment for a proposed feature documentary.
 - The treatment should define the subject of the film and how it addresses the following items and your professional goals:
 - Rationale/Thesis
 - Style
 - Content
 - Approach
 - Experimental Feature Film, Series of Short Films, or Body of Work:
 - The detailed written treatment/proposal should describe the subject of the film and express the filmmaker's intentions regarding approach and style. The length of the treatment/proposal should reflect the scope of the project.
 - Rationale/Thesis
Address why this topic was selected and why this film should be made. This portion of the treatment/proposal should demonstrate the filmmaker's knowledge and sense of context for the significance of the work. It can also state a "challenge" or question - one the project will address, explore, or attempt to answer.

- Approach

The filmmaker should express the style in which the film(s) or project will be made and how this style will enhance and express the nature of the subject and the meanings, thoughts, or impressions the filmmaker intends to reveal.

The filmmaker may choose to describe specific techniques with shooting on film or video, or experimenting with other forms of cinematic digital media, that will form the basis of inquiry or aesthetic and technical exploration within the thesis project.

- Résumé
- Provide two letters of recommendation, with at least one from an industry professional or college/university professor.
- Applicants applying to this program who have attended a college/university outside the United States must provide one official transcript and official certification of degree, with date awarded. See the [Sample Country Requirements](#) page for country specific requirements.

Applicants may be asked to participate in an admissions interview.

Meeting minimum UCF admission criteria does not guarantee program admission. Final admission is based on the evaluation of the applicant's abilities, past performance, recommendations, match of this program, and faculty expertise to the applicant's career/academic goals, the applicant's potential for completing the degree, and the current applicant pool. Applicants are encouraged to apply as early as possible due to limited cohort size. There is no guarantee that qualified applicants will be admitted after the cohort has been filled.

Degree Requirements

This program does not require a comprehensive exam. Students should involve their thesis advisor with their selection of electives and other curricular matters. Prior to the selection of the thesis advisor, the Graduate Program Coordinator (GPC) may advise students on such matters. Many of the procedures, policies, and forms described below are covered in greater detail within the **NSCM MFA Feature Film Production webcourse**. Once a student has been accepted into the program and enrolled for their first term at UCF, they must send their NID (network ID) to the Graduate Coordinator to be enrolled in this web course for the duration of their degree. Announcements may be sent to all MFA students through this web course, so you are responsible for setting up notifications for these announcements.

Narrative, Documentary, or Experimental Modalities

Students pursue one or a combination of three modalities for their thesis films during their first two semesters in the program: narrative, documentary, and experimental. All MFA candidates take their core required courses which develop their thesis projects and will also choose electives that best match their modalities and interests. Students may change modalities only during the first two semesters (20 credits) of the program. Students are encouraged to choose external electives that complement their work after discussion with the graduate program coordinator or their thesis chair. Students wishing to change modality after the second semester can only do so with the consent of both their thesis advisor and the program coordinator. Changes in modality after the first year are rarely approved and may require additional coursework and time spent in the program.

Electives

Students should consult with their thesis advisor on which electives are the best fit for them and when they should take those courses during the program. Courses taken as part of a UCF-based graduate certificate may be used as external electives. Before enrolling in an external elective, you should contact the graduate program coordinator for that discipline to explore when the course you want will be offered and whether or not it has any prerequisites or other restrictions. For example, before enrolling in an animation course, you should contact the GPC for the Animation MFA for more information.

Please review the current curriculum for our program below (also available on the [Graduate Catalog](#)).

Current Curriculum

Required Courses

39 Total Credits

- Complete all of the following
 - Complete the following:
 - [FIL5406](#) - Theories of Film Production (3)
 - [FIL5800](#) - Research Methods in Film and Digital Media (3)
 - [FIL6454](#) - Microbudget Production Design (3)
 - [FIL6186](#) - Advanced Directing Workshop for Film and Digital Media (3)

- [FIL6619](#) - Guerrilla Marketing and Models of Distribution (3)
- [FIL6644](#) - Microbudget Pre-Production (3)
- [FIL6673](#) - Arts and Media Entrepreneurship (3)
- Earn at least 6 credits from the following:
 - [FIL5419](#) - Developing the Film Screenplay (3)
 - [FIL6146](#) - Screenplay Refinement (3)
 - [FIL5370C](#) - Documentary Production I (3)
 - [FIL5371C](#) - Documentary Production II (3)
 - [FIL5422C](#) - Experimental Cinema II (3)
 - [FIL5426C](#) - Experimental Cinema I (3)
- Earn at least 6 credits from the following:
 - [FIL6649](#) - Microbudget Post-Production (3)
- Earn at least 6 credits from the following:
 - [FIL5924](#) - Graduate Seminar (1)
- Note: FIL6649 is a repeatable course taken for two semesters.
- Note: FIL 5924 Graduate Seminar is 1 Credit Hour to be taken each semester for a total of 6 credits.

Internal Elective Courses

6 Total Credits

- Complete all of the following
 - Students select a minimum of 6 credit hours of internal electives that reflect their mode of filmmaking interest (narrative, documentary, or experimental). One additional internal elective course may be taken to substitute for an external elective if approved by the graduate program coordinator. Students in other graduate programs are required to receive instructor consent before enrolling.
 - Complete at least 2 of the following:
 - [FIL5370C](#) - Documentary Production I (3)
 - [FIL5371C](#) - Documentary Production II (3)
 - [FIL5422C](#) - Experimental Cinema II (3)
 - [FIL5426C](#) - Experimental Cinema I (3)
 - [FIL5809](#) - Independent Cinema (3)
 - [FIL6596](#) - Advanced Directing Workshop for Film and Digital Media (3)
 - [FIL6619](#) - Guerrilla Marketing and Models of Distribution (3)
 - [MMC6600](#) - Media Effects and Audience Analysis (3)
 - [MMC6735](#) - Social Media as Mass Communication (3)
 - [MMC6567](#) - New Media (3)
 - [MMC6307](#) - International Communication (3)

- Note: FIL 6908 Independent Study and FIL 6918 Directed Research may be taken for a total of no more than six credit hours each.
- Note: FIL 6596 and FIL 6619 are repeatable courses. Three credit hours are required, but any additional three credit hour section may be taken as an internal elective.

External Electives

3 Total Credits

- Complete all of the following
 - Students select a minimum of 3 credit hours of external electives that align with their particular interests, outside the MFA in Feature Film Production. Choice of external electives should be made after discussion with the thesis advisor or graduate coordinator. Other electives related to the thesis topic may be approved by the graduate coordinator. Not all of these courses are offered every term, prerequisites and consent of instructor may be required.
 - Complete at least 1 external elective course.
 - A list of possible external elective courses can be found on [the Feature Film Production Catalogue page](#). Note: The catalog here in this handbook is the most up-to-date version, whereas the webpage may need to be updated. The external electives listed on the webpage, however, are up-to-date.
 - Note that up to two internal graduate-level electives may be allowed to substitute for external electives. External electives, however, may not be substituted for internal electives.

Thesis

10 Total Credits

- Complete all of the following
 - Earn at least 10 credits from the following:
 - [FIL6971](#) - Thesis (1 - 99)

Before undertaking the thesis project, candidates must meet with the thesis advisory committee to submit and discuss the proposed project and obtain the committee's approval. The thesis requires intensive applied learning in order to complete a feature-length project and/or body of work. The student cannot enroll in thesis hours until the thesis advisory committee has been selected and approved. Once a student has begun to take thesis hours, they must enroll in at least one thesis hour for each remaining term until graduation. Students may

spread out thesis hours any way they wish but are advised to follow recommendations in the program handbook.

The thesis project has a strong research component both in the initial development phase and in the creation of the distribution and marketing plan for the project. In addition to creating the feature film or body of work, the student must write an accompanying thesis paper that meets all university requirements (see ETD Requirements). The final stage of the curriculum serves as a bridge to the professional world and supports the entrepreneurial philosophy of the program. The thesis project must be reviewed by the faculty adviser throughout the production process and meet agreed-upon criteria within a stated time frame. Once the thesis project is completed, candidates must have a screening or exhibition of the work and meet with the thesis advisory committee for final approval and oral defense.

Grand Total Credits: **58**

Independent Study and Directed Research

Courses taken outside UCF, such as acting classes, may count as a Directed Research under the supervision of a faculty member. Only Independent Studies (FIL 6908) may be used as substitutes for required courses, and students are limited to taking 6 hours of independent studies. However, there is no limit to the number of Directed Research (FIL 6918) courses students may take. Students may receive credit for working on a classmate's production by signing up for a Directed Research. We encourage first-year students working in the narrative modality to enroll in Directed Research and work on a second-year student's thesis production during the summer between their first and second years. To do this, students will need to find a faculty member to guide the Directed Research.

Criteria for Internship

Internships may be obtained as electives but would be recommended during the summer between the first and second year of the program. The basic criteria for designation as an internship course at UCF include student experiential learning which:

- Relates directly to a student's academic major or major-related career goal
- Occurs in business, industry, non-profit, educational, or governmental agencies
- Involves collaboration between campus and business community that

- aims to increase students' work, personal, and academic competencies
- Provides appropriate supervision both on site through a professional with related training and skills and through guidance from faculty
 - Involves structure for learning, including application of classroom content and assignments for reflection that would result in the development of student competencies and go beyond simple assignment of a student completing a set number of hours experience in a setting outside the academic classroom
 - Involves a minimum of 45 hours per credit per semester at the participating work site to provide real- world experience and to promote interaction between students and professionals toward the development of professional attitudes and behavior (more hours may be required; fewer hours may be justified by the concentration of the experience or the learning objectives)

All Directed Research, Independent Study and Internship must be accompanied by a syllabus with expectations and due dates. This document serves as a contract between the instructor of record and the student for the grade is determined. Please contact the NSCM Graduate Student Services Coordinator for additional details (nicholsongrad@ucf.edu).

Thesis Hours

Generally, a student begins taking thesis hours in spring or summer of year two. Once a student has begun taking Thesis (FIL 6971) they must continue to do so each term until graduation, but they may break up their 10 required thesis hours any way they choose. If your thesis advisor is not on contract over the summer and you need to take thesis hours, a member of your thesis committee can sign off on your registration form. The student's thesis advisory committee must be approved by the College of Graduate Studies before the student is allowed to enroll in thesis hours.

Film Equipment and Editing Facilities & Greenlight

Due to the high demand for equipment and facilities during the fall and spring terms, students are limited in the *scope* of any productions they wish to create prior to their thesis films. While we encourage graduate students to produce a fundraising video or proof of concept short, this can only be done within the confines of established courses under the supervision of a graduate faculty member and must be approved in advance by Film Operations.

Prior to being greenlit and after a thesis advisor has been selected, graduate students making films in any modality may check out gear for a small-scale production outside of undergraduate peak production times. It is the student's responsibility to read, understand, and acknowledge the MFA and Student Production Handbooks (link: <https://thedataframe.com/policies-and-procedures/>) available at The Data Frame (link: <https://thedataframe.com/>). The following would exemplify a small-scale production for a narrative film:

- 1 camera
- small light kit
- small audio kit
- crew of less than 5

Any production larger than described would require being greenlit following a full thesis proposal presentation.

All productions require approval from the thesis advisor; gear must be reserved no less than three days in advance and must be returned within one week or less.

Completion Timeline

Below is a sample full-time schedule of courses for a student making a thesis in the NARRATIVE modality. Students making DOCUMENTARIES or EXPERIMENTAL FILMS may take up to nine hours of split-level Experimental Cinema and Documentary Production courses instead of screenwriting, upon approval by the course instructors and the graduate coordinator. Courses may be taught face to face or online, depending on circumstances and decisions made by the university, school, or program. Students receiving university support or financial aid should familiarize themselves with [policies regarding full-time enrollment](#). The schedule of courses will be different if a student is completing the program on a part-time basis. Slots for part-time students are very limited

Sample Full-time Schedule		
Fall – Year 1	Spring - Year 1	Expectations at Year One
- FIL 5406 Theories of Film Production (required, 3 hours) - FIL 5800 Research Methods in Film & Digital Media (required, 3 hours) - FIL 5419 Developing the Film Screenplay (required, 3 hours) - Documentary Students take FIL 5370C - Experimental Students take FIL5422C - FIL 5924 Graduate Seminar (required, 1 hour)	- FIL 6596 Advanced Directing Workshop (required, 3 hours) - Elective (3 hours) - FIL 6146 Screenplay Refinement (required, 3 hours) - Documentary Students take FIL 5371C - Experimental Students take FIL5426C - FIL 5924 Graduate Seminar (required, 1 hour)	- Selection of thesis chair - Locked project screenplay or equivalent document - Preliminary Script Breakdown, Schedule, and Budget - Short Proof of Concept Film - Pitch Deck with Marketing and Fundraising Plan
Total Credit Hours: 10 credit hours	Total Credit Hours: 10 credit hours	
Fall - Year 2	Spring - Year 2	Expectations at Year Two
- FIL 6644 Microbudget Pre-Production (required, 3 hours) - FIL 6649 Microbudget Post-Production, 1st out of 2 required times (3 hours) - FIL6673 Arts and Media Entrepreneurship (required, 3 hours) - FIL 5924 Graduate Seminar (required, 1 hour)	- FIL 6454 Microbudget Production Design (required, 3 hours) - Elective (3 hours) - Thesis (2 hours) - Students are also required to take (1) Thesis hour in Summer for their productions. - FIL 5924 Graduate Seminar (Required, 1 hour) During Spring of Year Two students are expected to present a thesis proposal defense to the thesis committee with the goal of being greenlit for summer production	Fall Benchmarks - Finalized Budget and Production Breakdown - Finalized Schedule - Key Creative Collaborators Set Spring Benchmarks - Greenlit for summer production at Thesis Proposal Presentation - Secure 80% of funding
Total Credit Hours: 10 credit hours	Total Credit Hours: 9 credit hours	Total Credit Hours (Summer) 1 Credit Hour
Fall - Year 3	Spring - Year 3	
- FIL 6649 Microbudget Post-Production, 2nd out of 2 required times (3 hours) - FIL 6971 Thesis (required, 5 hours) - FIL 5924 Graduate Seminar (required, 1 hour)	- FIL 6619 Guerrilla Marketing & Models of Distribution (required, 3 hours) - Elective (3 hours) - FIL 6971 Thesis (required, 2 hours) - FIL 5924 Graduate Seminar (required, 1 hour) During spring of year three the student is expected to defend their thesis film and complete their thesis dissertation according to university thesis guidelines.	Fall Benchmarks - Full Assembly Cut - Finished 1st Reels with Sound, VFX, and Color Spring Benchmarks - Completion and Public Screening of Fine Cut - Completion and Successful Defense of ETD
Total Credit Hours: 9 credit hours	Total Credit Hours: 9 credit hours	Total Credit Hours: 58 credit hours

MFA Production Timeframe

In general, MFA Productions are shot during the summer when BFA students are more available to serve on crews, and the film facility is not overburdened by undergraduate productions. *Any request to shoot an MFA thesis film or portions of the film outside the summer term must be approved in advance by the GPC and Film Operations.* All UCF film productions must be shot during a regularly scheduled term in order to be covered by the student insurance policy. When the university is closed, the policy does not cover productions, therefore no production utilizing the school's policy may be shot during winter break or during breaks between terms.

Statement of Graduate Research

UCF has three fundamental responsibilities with regard to graduate student research. They are to (1) support an academic environment that stimulates the spirit of inquiry, (2) develop the intellectual property stemming from research, and (3) disseminate the intellectual property to the general public. Students are responsible for being informed of rules, regulations and policies pertaining to research. Below are some general policies and resources.

Research Policies and Ethics Information: UCF's Office of Research & Commercialization ensures the UCF community complies with local, state and federal regulations that relate to research. For policies including required Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval when conducting research involving human subjects (e.g. surveys), animal research, conflict of interest and general responsible conduct of research, please see their website: research.ucf.edu/ > Compliance.

Thesis and Dissertation Section

Master of Fine Arts Thesis – Overview

There are two components to the thesis project: (1) the film itself; and (2) the written submission, also referred to as the Electronic Thesis or Dissertation (ETD). The student is required to satisfy the demands of both components, and they are typically prepared simultaneously.

All MFA in Feature Film Production candidates are responsible for understanding which rights UCF will retain in the film and how the student (and the student's producers, assigns, licensees and/or designees) can retain certain rights. Please review the [Ownership of Intellectual Property Policy](#) in the current UCF Graduate Catalog.

All committee members vote on acceptance or rejection of the final thesis. The thesis proposal and final thesis must be approved by a majority of the committee.

Master of Fine Arts Thesis – Committees

Selecting Committee Members

Each student must have a Thesis Advisory Committee in addition to the Thesis Advisor. The Thesis Advisory Committee must consist of at least three members, including the Thesis Advisor, who are approved members of the [Graduate Faculty or Graduate Faculty Scholars](#) as found online in the current UCF Graduate Catalog. This committee will provide continual guidance for the student and be the principal mechanism for the evaluation of the student's thesis and performance in any general examinations. In addition to the Thesis Advisor, at least one member must be Graduate Faculty. Graduate Faculty Scholars may serve as a member or co-Chair of a Thesis Advisory Committee but may not serve as the Chair. Graduate Faculty members must form the majority of any given committee. All Thesis Advisory Committee members must be in fields related to the thesis topic.

Students must fill out and submit a Thesis Advisory Committee Form once all committee members have been identified and agreed to serve. Students can obtain this form and additional details from the NSCM Graduate Student Services Coordinator (nicholsongrad@ucf.edu). The UCF College of Graduate Studies reserves the right to review appointments to a Thesis Advisory Committee, place a representative on any Thesis Advisory Committee, or appoint a co-Chair. Students may request a change in

membership to their Thesis Advisory Committee with the approval of the Film Program Coordinator. Any change to a student's Thesis Advisor Committee requires submission of an updated Thesis Advisory Committee Form to the NSCM Graduate Student Services Coordinator.

Thesis Proposal Presentation and Final Defense - Overview

In the proceeding pages of this handbook, you will find in-depth explanations of two different defenses required to earn your degree: Thesis Proposal Presentation/Defense (Spring 2nd year) that leads to an official production green-light and the Thesis Defense (semester of graduation). Think of the Thesis Proposal Presentation/Defense as a practice-run, with its own specific requirements, for the Thesis Defense required for graduation from the program, which usually takes place in the third year.

Note: As you read through the upcoming section on the Thesis Proposal/Presentation Defense, you may wish to refer to the subsequent sub-section of this handbook titled Thesis Film Production.

The Thesis Proposal Presentation/Defense (To obtain a 'Green-light')

The making of a feature length film requires attention to a myriad of details, in order to bring the filmmaker's artistic vision to the screen. To free the artist from being overwhelmed by production details, the student's thesis proposal aims to ensure thorough planning prior to the production period. While unforeseen challenges are certain to be a part of the production experience, thoughtful time spent addressing the basics will ensure a less exhausting and more successful shoot.

By the start of the student's fourth full-time semester in the program, or by the completion of 30 credit hours for part-time students, you are required to submit a formal thesis proposal for approval. The student first submits the proposal to their Thesis Advisor and Thesis Advisory Committee members and then, when approved by the majority of the committee, the student prepares a Thesis Proposal Presentation to be delivered to their Thesis Advisory Committee. By **April 15th** of the second year, full-time students are expected to have successfully proposed and earned a 'green-light' upon successfully defending their thesis proposals to their committees.

The Thesis Proposal Defense provides the student with an opportunity to demonstrate preparedness and passion for the project and receive feedback that must be addressed prior to moving forward with the thesis project.

Collectively, the Thesis Advisory Committee members are charged with determining the student filmmaker's readiness for the next stage of production based on a review of the material and the student's presentation. The committee is charged to pay special attention to the planning and preparation segments of the proposal.

Following the presentation, the Thesis Advisory Committee makes a recommendation to the Film Graduate Coordinator and the Thesis Advisor on whether the project should move forward and details its recommendations with specificity.

Projects aim to earn a "yellow-light" so that the student will have a chance to complete financing. Evidence of strong preparation will be key to obtaining a yellow light. Films lacking preparation or funding will receive a "red-light" and cannot advance into production. "Green-lighting" can only happen when the student has financing in place, has submitted all documentation required as outlined in the most current MFA in Feature Film Production Handbook, and has scheduled the first production meeting.

Risk Management and Insurance

Prior to the presentation, the student must have appeared before the Risk Management Council to make sure that all scenes meet parameters of the school's insurance policy (or any policy the student has purchased on their own). The Nicholson School of Communication and Media provides a limited production insurance policy that graduate students may utilize for their productions. Students have the option of applying for a rider to cover anything that falls outside of this basic policy (moving car scenes, water, etc.), but must follow strict guidelines when doing so. Highly technical and expensive activities such as stunts, explosions, car chases, etc. are strongly discouraged even if the student decides to buy extra insurance.

Deadline for Summer Production

Students going into production in the summer are encouraged to hold their Thesis Proposal Defense as early in the spring term as possible, preferably before spring break. *Students must be greenlit before April 15th, or they will not be approved for production during the summer.*

Green light minimum standards for narrative feature films
(modifications for other modalities to be determined by thesis committee)

- Locked script
 - 80–100% funding verifiable by bank statements
 - Schedule/Stripboard/One-liner
 - 60% location agreements signed
 - Key Cast agreements signed
 - Key Crew members signed
- DP, Sound mixer, and others per project as decided by committee

Format of the Thesis Proposal PDF

Thesis Proposal Contents

Each student's approach to production will be unique and the specific contents of the Thesis Proposal may vary. The student will confer with their Thesis Advisor to agree on requirements for the formal Thesis Proposal.

There are certain literacies developed throughout the curriculum, however, that are common to all students and require evidence of competency. Considerations for the Thesis Proposal include the following elements:

Aesthetic Vision	Fundraising & Exhibition Strategy	Production Methods
Filmmaker's Statement Literature Review and Screening List Script Shot Lists Storyboards Animatics Set Diagrams Visual Palettes Transcripts Notebook/Journal Sketches Photographs Ripomatic Video/Camera Test Casting Sessions	Business Plan Budget Assumptions Complete Budget Final Cost Report Proof of Funding Pitch Materials Corporate Documents Profit Sharing Plan Grant Application(s) Cash Flow Statement Weekly Cost Reports Investor Documents Private Placement Memo Crowdfunding Campaigns	Theory of Production LLC Documentation Reflection Statement Deal Memos Shooting Schedule Completion Timeline Including Post Copy of Film upon Completion Crew Lists Location Lists Contracts Sample Call Sheets Sample Production Reports Release and Consent Forms Chain of Title Copyright Registration Retention of a Lawyer Contracts/Writers Agreements Proof of Insurance Film Scenes (Demonstrate Directing) Set Location Permit Schedule SAG Signatory Documents Equipment List/Sources Art Department Schedule Day out of Days Director's Assembly

Submitting the Initial Thesis Proposal PDF Document

The student should submit his or her initial Thesis Proposal PDF to the Thesis Advisor and to each thesis committee member by an agreed upon date and format established in consultation with the Thesis Advisor. The Thesis Advisor and each committee member will review the student's proposal and comment on its contents within 10 business days of their receipt of the thesis proposal materials. The student then works on recommended areas of improvement with the Thesis Advisor and committee members.

With the guidance of the Thesis Advisor, the student establishes milestone dates to ensure readiness for the final Thesis Proposal presentation to the Thesis Advisory Committee. It is important for the student to be proactive during this time, developing a plan to secure necessary permissions, letters of intent, clearances, and source approvals.

The student is responsible for communicating regularly and thoroughly with their Thesis Advisor and for maintaining a schedule that supports successful progress toward completion. Be advised that many professors do not work during the summer term and may not be available to assist the student with thesis work during this time.

Sample Timeline from Proposal to Production

	Year 2: August - October	Year 2: November
Student	- Continue working on refining thesis proposal. See Film MFA Student Handbook. - Identify dates that the Risk Management Council is meeting	- Submit completed/signed Restricted Registration Form (for spring thesis hours) to Graduate Program staff. - Continue working on thesis proposal. - Submit materials to the Risk Management Council in advance of meetings
Thesis Advisor	- Confirm with student role as thesis advisor; help with formation of thesis committee. - Continue helping student with requirements of thesis proposal.	- Sign off on Restricted Registration form if student will begin thesis hours. - Continue helping student with thesis proposal.

	Year 2: December (Before the end of the semester)	Year 2: January
Student	- Schedule Thesis Proposal Presentation meeting (to be held by the end of March). Confirm with all Thesis Advisory Committee members. - Continue working on thesis proposal.	- Finalize thesis proposal documents. - Submit to/appear before Risk Management Council if you haven't done so - Send Thesis Advisory Committee a reminder about the meeting and confirm attendance.
Thesis Advisor	- Meet with student to confirm that the Thesis Proposal Presentation meeting has been set and establish goals for the first term in thesis hours. - Continue helping student with thesis proposal up to the date of the Thesis Proposal Defense	- Confirm with student that Thesis Proposal Presentation is progressing and date has been set. - Review/approve Thesis Proposal materials before student emails materials to Thesis Advisory Committee.
Greenlight Procedures	PRIOR TO APRIL 15 THESIS ADVISOR: - Send email to Film Operations and GPC notifying them the student has been greenlit for production. - Enter information about the production into the Microsoft Teams "MFA Production Tracker"	STUDENT: - Complete your "Greenlight Survey" with attachments listing all dates, locations, crew members, cast members, etc. - Arrange meeting with Film Operations, Thesis Advisor, and Key Creatives

Thesis Proposal Presentation

Setting Up the Thesis Proposal Presentation

Students preparing for their Thesis Proposal Presentation are responsible for communicating with each member of their thesis committee at the beginning of the semester during which the thesis proposal presentation will take place. Based on the availability of committee members, the student will schedule the date and time of the presentation. Once determined, the student or Thesis Advisor will reserve the space. The student is responsible for delivering the thesis proposal packet electronically (requirements detailed above) to all members of the Thesis Advisory Committee no less than 2 weeks in advance of the Thesis Proposal Presentation. Ultimately, the student is responsible for planning and producing the Thesis Proposal Presentation.

The following documents, which should be included in or along with the thesis proposal packet emailed to the committee, must be *completed and approved* during the Thesis Proposal Presentation in order for the student to be permitted to move forward with production (aka “green light”):

- Complete feature length script (60-90 pages)
- Shooting Schedule (does not include specific dates)
- Shot list, storyboard, and/or other evidence of visualization
- Full Crew List (signed agreements, as many as possible)
- Full Cast List (signed agreements, as many as possible)
- Proof of financing equal to at least 80% of the proposed budget (bank statement)
- Proof of insurance (school or individual certificate)

Students with thesis work that requires alternative forms of production documentation or alternative production processes must consult with their Thesis Advisor and committee members during the semester preceding their thesis proposal presentation (typically in the fall of the second year) to determine the documents needed for the thesis proposal packet and the Thesis Proposal Defense, in addition to the terms by which the project will be evaluated for red, yellow, or green light status. The required documents should be adapted from the list above where possible.

Production Approval Timeline

Thesis Proposal Defense	No fewer than 9 weeks prior to the first day of principal photography.
Greenlight	Within 10 business days after Thesis Proposal Presentation
Notify Film Operations of Proposed Production Dates	No fewer than 6 weeks prior to the first day of principal photography.

Submit Sound Stage Application	No fewer than 2 weeks prior to the first day of principal photograph.
Submit Equipment Requisition	No fewer than 3 business days prior to desired checkout date.
Principal Photography	The bulk of scheduled production – does not include promo, camera tests, pickups, or reshoots.

To avoid compounding scheduling issues, students are strongly encouraged to submit all the above items as early as possible and not to wait until the minimum deadlines.

Graduate students must notify Film Operations of their proposed production schedule no less than six weeks from the first day of principal photography. Students must be GREENLIT before they can lock-in the specific dates for their final production schedule, and they must be GREENLIT before they can begin submitting equipment and facility reservations for principal photography. All graduate students are expected to coordinate with their classmates to avoid overlapping their production dates. No more than two graduate-level projects may be in production at any given time. Any overlap between productions must be approved by the Film Operations Manager. Additional information on production insurance, set safety guidelines, and how to procure equipment and facilities for your production can be found in the NSCM Film Production and Exhibition Handbook located in the [Policies and Procedures section](#) of [The Data Frame](#).

Students with thesis projects that necessitate nontraditional production timelines are expected to follow the established production approval timeline unless an alternative timeline is established. Alternative production approval timelines must be discussed and agreed upon by the student, their Thesis Advisor, and Film Operations during the semester preceding their thesis proposal presentation (typically in the fall of the second year) or as soon as possible in the development process. All graduate students are required to meet with the Film Operations Manager prior to locking-in their production dates for principal photography.

Evaluating the Thesis Proposal

The goal of the student is to receive a recommendation for a "yellow light" by the Thesis Advisory Committee so that the filmmaker may go forward to finalize financing and begin production. Collectively, the Thesis Advisory Committee is charged with confirming a student's readiness for the next stage based on its review of the material and the interview with the student. "Green-lighting" the project can only happen when the student has financing in place; only the Film Program Coordinator may green light a project, in consultation with the Thesis Advisor.

The Thesis Advisory Committee evaluates the project and makes specific recommendations in the following categories:

- Script / Research
- Vision / Visual Treatment
- Schedule and Logistics
- Budget and Financing
- Market / Audience
- Fit with Student's Professional Goals

The Script, Treatment, or Conceptual Approach

The Thesis Advisory Committee may consider the following:

- Are the screenplay and scope of the production suitable for the proposed budget (e.g. number of speaking parts, number of locations, etc.)?
- Is the concept and/or story clear, engaging, or compelling?
- Does the pace of the story feel appropriate for the proposed exhibition format (e.g. cinema, online platform, gallery)
- What questions of character, plot, or concept are raised or left unanswered by the project?
- Is the screenplay or other developmental materials appropriate for or attractive to the kinds of creative collaborators required by the content and scope of the project (e.g. actors, crew, financiers)?
- Are there production challenges in the screenplay, treatment, or concept that the student fails to acknowledge? Does the student appear to be prepared to tackle such challenges or any others that arise during production and postproduction?
- What does the project mean to the student? Why do they want to do this project at this time in their career?

The Budget and Schedule

The Thesis Advisory Committee may consider the following:

- Does the budget make sense for the length and scope of the work?
- Does the plan for financing – or the financing itself – seem reasonable and realistic? (Financing must be in place for a green light to be awarded. This requires proof with a bank statement or other financial document.)
- Does the budget address the needs of the screenplay and scope of the production, including such items as plans for casting, travel, and housing? Are postproduction, marketing, and exhibition costs included?
- Does the schedule include contingencies for rain days, re-shoots and any other possible delays?

Thesis Advisory Committee Recommendation

After the Thesis Proposal Defense, the Thesis Advisory Committee will make a recommendation to the Graduate Coordinator and the Thesis Advisor as to the student's approval status: Green light, Yellow light, or Red light. The decision will be provided in writing by the Thesis Advisor, addressed to the Graduate Coordinator and to Film Operations, no later than 14 business days following the Thesis Proposal Presentation. Thesis Advisory Committee members are expected to give the student their individual opinions, judgments, and advice as well.

These individual comments can be included with the final recommendation. A copy of the final recommendation should be sent to the NSCM Graduate Student Services Coordinator (nicholsongrad@ucf.edu).

Following the Thesis Proposal Defense, the student's next step should be to thoughtfully consider the comments of the Thesis Advisory Committee members and, in the case of a yellow or red light, prepare a response to the issues raised. The student's response should identify their priorities, with specific timelines for completion that relate to the project's next steps.

The student is required to email the report, and any supplemental material the student chooses, to the Thesis Advisor and Graduate Coordinator no later than one week's time from the student's receipt of the thesis committee's recommendation. The Graduate Coordinator will review the written responses to the Thesis Advisory Committee's comments and discuss the status of the thesis proposal with the student and their Thesis Advisor.

Any supplemental materials and comments should be sent to the NSCM Graduate Student Services Coordinator (nicholsongrad@ucf.edu). Green-light status is needed for the student to move forward with locking-in production dates and procuring resources from Film Operations. A yellow light allows the student to continue with preparation for production, but they must meet the conditions and timeline put forth by the Thesis Advisory Committee before their status is upgraded to green light.

When a student receives a red light from the Thesis Advisory Committee, it will be accompanied by a clear list of what must be submitted by the student to their Thesis Advisor to move forward with the thesis project. The Thesis Advisor will then be responsible for working with the student to assign due dates for each requested item and may schedule a collaborative meeting with the Graduate Coordinator to review the student's response(s) and timeline forward. If necessary, a second presentation before the Thesis Advisory Committee may be scheduled.

The Thesis Advisory Committee understands that its judgment in this matter needs to consider the standards its members hold for themselves as well as those inherent in the medium of the student's project and in the University community of scholars and artists.

Thesis Film Production

The filmmaking process itself contributes to how the thesis will be evaluated. How the film is made, the quality and character of the production experience, and its organization may be observed on the set by the Thesis Advisor, Thesis Committee members, or other members of the University community. The thesis project will be reviewed by the Thesis Advisor throughout the production process and held to criteria agreed upon by the student and the Thesis Advisor. Should the Thesis Advisor, Graduate Program Coordinator, or Film Operations Manager find any aspect of the in-process production unsafe or in violation of the law, they have the right to require the halting of the production until the student adequately addresses the issue(s).

To ensure an ongoing exchange of information and production support, the student is required to communicate with their Thesis Advisor and/or the Graduate Coordinator (depending on the time of year the production takes place) throughout the production according to specific protocol explained below.

Financing the Thesis Film Production

Students making narrative feature films will be required to develop a business plan, crowdfunding campaign, or other approved plan for fundraising and any other materials relevant to acquiring the financial means needed for completion of the work. It is the student's responsibility to finance their film production, and a variety of resources are available throughout the Central Florida community. Students should plan for raising substantially less funding than desired.

All MFA Students must read and abide by the [Production and Exhibition Handbook](#) and its Appendices regarding insurance disclosures and parameters.

Production Meeting

The student must schedule a production meeting with Film Operations at least one week prior to the start of principal photography and must invite their Thesis Advisor and/or the Graduate Coordinator (depending on the time of year the production takes place). Invitations must be extended to the appropriate advisor at least one week prior to the meeting, in writing via email. The student, the project's Producer, and the First

Assistant Director (if applicable) are required to attend the production meeting. Invitations should also be extended if subsequent production meetings are called but are not required.

Production Forms

Prior to the initial production meeting, the student's Thesis Advisor will work with the student to approve which forms will be required to be submitted (and to whom) during production. It is recommended that the student (or appropriate crew member) submit a daily production report to the Thesis Advisor or Graduate Coordinator at the end of each production day. Any forms submitted to the Thesis Advisor or Graduate Coordinator during production should be sent to the NSCM Graduate Student Services Coordinator (nicholsongrad@ucf.edu).

Tech Scout

It is the responsibility of the Producer of each thesis film to ensure that the Thesis Advisor and/or the Graduate Coordinator is notified by e-mail of the time and location of the production's initial tech scout. Notification should be provided at least one week in advance of the meeting date. Every effort should be made to find a time that allows for the Thesis Advisor and/or the Graduate Coordinator to be in attendance at the tech scout. The attendance of the MFA student at the tech scout is required. At the meeting, a current list of locations secured to date should be provided, in addition to a proposal for where remaining locations will be found.

Set Protocol

The student, in partnership with their producer, must assign clear roles, responsibilities, and areas of authority for those on the set, honor those assignments, and establish clear and consistent modes of communication.

Intimacy Coordination

All graduate students are required to follow Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG-AFTRA) protocol around intimacy, sex scenes, and nudity. The standards outlined in the guides below must be followed before and during production. Thesis Proposal Presentations must address how these policies will be followed.

- [SAG-AFTRA Quick Guide for Scenes Involving Nudity and Simulated Sex](#)
- [Casting Directors' Guide: Casting Roles for Intimate Scenes](#)

Visits to the Set

Any film faculty member is welcome at any time on any set of a graduate student film in production. Faculty should check with the Graduate Coordinator for call sheets and maps on the day they wish to visit. It is the responsibility of the Producer of each student film to update the Graduate Coordinator with current maps and call sheets, and to inform them of any and all changes that impact shooting times, such as delayed start dates, delayed call times, changes in location, restrictions for the location, etc

Reports

The student's Thesis Advisor will determine which reports and forms (call sheets, daily production reports, script supervisor's wrap reports, injury reports, missing and damaged reports, weekly cost reports, dailies, etc.) are to be used throughout the production. Templates for production reports can be found through [The Data Frame](#). Any reports submitted to the Thesis Advisor or Graduate Coordinator should also be sent to the NSCM Graduate Student Services Coordinator (nicholsongrad@ucf.edu).
Final ETD and Thesis Film Requirements

Electronic Thesis – Overview

The written thesis is considered distinct from the Thesis Film and any rights designated or associated therewith. The written thesis is the final document that satisfies the academic requirements for achieving the MFA degree. It is often referred to as the ETD, or Electronic Thesis and Dissertation. The university provides clear guidelines for how the written thesis is required to be formatted and submitted. These may be found online at graduate.ucf.edu/thesis-and-dissertation/. The written thesis becomes a part of the body of scholarship available to others interested in the making of micro-budget feature films.

Electronic Thesis – Form and Content

The ETD is submitted to the university and made available for download online, and consists of a single, bookmarked PDF file (with accompanying DVD if appropriate) with the following minimum components:

- Frontmatter
- Title page

- Abstract
- Acknowledgments (optional)
- Dedication (optional)
- Table of Contents
- List of Figures/List of Tables (as necessary)
- Body
- Introduction (Filmmaker's Statement)

Statement should include response to the following questions:

- What were your intentions when you first entered the program and began your film project, and what problems, challenges, and obstacles (intellectual, formal, artistic, logistical) did you encounter along the way?
- How did you address these problems?
- What have you learned from them? Be specific and provide thorough details.
- How has this experience helped you define your voice as an emerging film maker? Picture (in one of the following forms):
 - The work in its entirety (on DVD); or a link provided for online viewing
 - Up to three excerpts not to exceed 30 seconds each (on DVD); or a link provided for online viewing
 - Five or more screen captures/still images with descriptive captions (integrated as part of the PDF file) Research Materials
 - Screenplay
 - Documentary or experimental treatment

It is recommended that you retain the pagination of the original screenplay as these page numbers correspond to other documents, but you should incorporate the screenplay and include the new ETD pagination as well. One suggestion is to have the original screenplay pagination in the upper right-hand corner, and the ETD pagination in the center bottom.

Marketing Plan to include:

- Full page poster showing the central image and graphic treatment to be used for one-sheets, postcards and other marketing materials; and
- Marketing report that includes research of film festival opportunities, timeline and budget for festival distribution, and proposals and targets for further distribution (i.e.: theatrical, cable, DVD, etc.)

Appendixes

- Budget
- Final Production Schedule and Day Out of Days
- Chain of Title (with Copyright Form PA)
- Music synchronization Licenses
- Credit List
- Call Sheets
- It is requested that you include a complete version of the call sheet for the first and last day of the shoot, along with just the front page for all the other days. These should be in PDF format.
- Production Reports
- Final Cost Report (includes budget and actuals)
- Copies of contracts signed between the production company and all outside parties.

If the same contract was used multiple times, include a sample of the contract along with a list of the individuals who were contracted that includes each individual's role in or function on the film, and the date the contract was executed. These should include:

- Crew deal memos
- Cast contracts
- Location agreements
- SAG agreement if applicable
- Licensing agreements for music, images, logos, etc.
- Atmosphere contracts
- Payroll contract if applicable
- Permits
- Insurance certificates
- Equipment rental contracts
- Independent Contractors' agreements
- Lawyer Contract (s)

Any sensitive items, including specific dollar amounts, may be redacted at the film maker's discretion.

Students with thesis work that requires alternative forms of production documentation or alternative production processes must consult with their thesis advisor and committee members during the semester preceding their defense to determine the documents needed for Final ETD, in addition to the terms by which the thesis advisor will approve the document to move forward for the format review. The required documents should be adapted from the list above where possible.

University Thesis/Dissertation Requirements

The College of Graduate Studies [Thesis and Dissertation page](#) contains information on the university's requirements for dissertation formatting, format review, defenses, final submission, and more.

All university deadlines are listed in the [Academic Calendar](#). Consult with graduate director or advisor for potential earlier deadlines.

The following requirements must be met by dissertation students in their final term:

- Submit a properly formatted file for initial format review by the format review deadline
- Submit the Thesis and Dissertation Release Option form well before the defense
- Defend by the defense deadline
- Receive format approval (if not granted upon initial review)
- Submit signed approval form by final submission deadline
- Submit final dissertation document by final submission deadline

If at the time of format review you have missing items, please insert a placeholder page for each missing item, describing what is missing and when it will be inserted.

To view the online ETDs of Film MFA alumni, the navigation is:

ucf.catalog.fcla.edu/cf.jsp > type in last name of the film maker > change the next drop-down box to "Author" > click search

For example:

Knight, Ima - Knightro's Big Adventure

Students must format their dissertation according to the standards outlined in [Thesis and Dissertation Webcourse](#).

The College of Graduate Studies offers several thesis and dissertation [Workshops](#) each term. Students are highly encouraged to attend these workshops early in the dissertation process to fully understand the above policies and procedures.

The College of Graduate Studies thesis and dissertation office is best reached by email at editor@ucf.edu.

Final MFA Thesis Defense

Once the thesis film project is completed, the student must screen the fine cut film for all members of his/her Thesis Committee and meet with them for final approval. A final oral review before the Thesis Committee occurs at the end of the MFA program. The thesis

defense is an oral examination during which the students' Thesis Advisor and committee members may question the student about any facet of the artistic process, from the research to the viability of the script, to the methodologies utilized. Additionally, students should be prepared to discuss learning outcomes based on their experience in the MFA program. The oral defense is open to the university community.

Scheduling the defense

At the beginning of the semester in which you plan to graduate, work with your thesis advisor to schedule your defense date, based on classroom availability and committee members' schedules. Be sure to schedule a film classroom, or a room at the Graduate Student Center in Trevor Colburn Hall, for 2 hours. You may choose to screen your film during your defense or to send a link prior to it if you and all committee members are agreeable.

Please note the following change regarding summer thesis defenses and graduation, beginning with the 2024–2025 Handbook.

Thesis Defenses and graduation must take place in fall or spring semesters, not in the summer. A majority of our Graduate Faculty do not teach in the summer and are not consistently available in the summer to supervise the intensive work done in the final semester of earning your degree. The fairest policy is to exclude the possibility of summer graduations, rather than to allow it on conditions of your advisor teaching in the summer, since the summer teaching schedule is often determined well into the spring semester. Exceptions will be made only in the most exceptional and necessary circumstances.

Defense announcement

All students are required to submit a Thesis Defense Announcement to the NSCM graduate coordinator (nicholsongrad@ucf.edu) and the faculty grad coordinator three weeks prior to the date of their oral defense. A template is available in the Thesis and Dissertation webcourse.

Defense setting and program expectations

Your thesis defense should take place in person. In some cases, a hybrid or virtual defense may be arranged, if approved by your thesis advisor.

Preparing for the presentation

Prepare a presentation that summarizes the main ideas and findings discussed in your

ETD and through the creative problem-solving process of making your film. Prepare slides with main ideas, images, and clips; write out the key points and supporting rationale of your presentation; and rehearse it. You may find it helpful to use notecards or to print text in large font for notes during your presentation.

Additionally, in preparation for the defense, print up a form or bring a laptop with the Thesis Defense form ready for all members to sign, should you successfully pass your defense.

Example of a defense agenda

Thesis defenses typically last 2 hours

- a. Your presentation with slides, clips, and excerpts from ETD, organized by the main ideas of your thesis and your filmmaking process (30–45 minutes)
- b. Screening of your film, or clips of your film, depending on what you have agreed upon with your advisor (variable duration)
- c. Questions from the committee (approx. 20 min)
- d. Questions from the public (approx. 10 min)
- e. Discussion among the committee, during which you and the public exit the room (approx. 15 min)
- f. Discussion with you about the committee's expectations or conclusions (approx. 15 min)

After the defense

Upon a successful thesis defense, all members of your committee will need to indicate their approval by signing your Thesis Defense form. It is highly recommended that you bring either a paper form or a laptop to your defense, so that the form can be signed by everyone at that time.

Submit the form to the graduate coordinator as soon as possible to ensure that signatures can be collected by the university deadline. If the form is not submitted by the deadline, you may not be able to graduate.

The University publishes a thesis defense deadline for each semester (calendar.ucf.edu/).

Thesis Film and Dissertation – Submission

Electronic Thesis Dissertation (ETD)

Follow all procedures outlined on the [Electronic Thesis and Dissertation](#) website and in the webcourse for publication and final submission of the electronic thesis.

Requirements for the Film Submission

Fine Cut Submission

For the MFA in Feature Film Production degree, students are expected to submit a completed feature length film or its equivalent (60 minutes or more in length) in Fine Cut form with all picture, sound, and credits in place.

The Film Program defines a “Fine Cut” as a fully realized version of the film in which all editorial decisions are complete and the film can be evaluated in its entirety for structure, performance, pacing, and storytelling. While sound, color, and visual effects may remain in progress, all elements must be developed to a level that supports clear, uninterrupted evaluation of the film. For the MFA in Feature Film Production degree, students are expected to submit a completed feature length film or its equivalent (60 minutes or more in length) in Fine Cut form with all images, sounds and credits in place.

Fine Cut details are as follows:

- Picture is locked (no further editorial changes)
 - Structure, pacing, and performances are final
 - No placeholder scenes or missing sequences
- Full head and tail credits in place
- All visual effects shots must be present and integrated into the edit.
 - While final rendering, compositing polish, or advanced finishing may remain in progress, each effect must be developed enough to convey timing, composition, and narrative intent without ambiguity.
- Temp score in place, along with a plan of action to achieve final score (e.g. composer agreement or other details for how music will be addressed).
- Work-in-Progress Sound Mix
 - The sound mix must include all necessary elements (dialogue, music, sound effects) balanced to ensure clarity and intelligibility.
 - Dialogue must be consistently audible and free of major technical issues (e.g., distortion, extreme level inconsistencies, or missing elements).
 - Dialogue levels should generally fall between **-15 dBFS and -10 dBFS**, with a target around **-12 dBFS**
 - Maximum Mix Level (True Peak): **-2dBFS**
- Work-in-Progress Color Grade
 - Color correction must be sufficiently consistent to avoid distracting shifts in exposure, white balance, or color continuity between shots.

- The image should reflect a coherent visual intention, even if final grading has not yet been completed.
- All submissions must be mastered in the **Rec.709 color space with Gamma 2.4**

This is not to be considered a work-in-progress cut. The film should be in such a form that it is ready for film festival submission and for the student's oral defense with the Thesis Committee.

Though final sound mix, VFX, color grading, and other delivery specifications may be completed after graduation, it is strongly encouraged to submit your film in a form that is ready for festival submission while you still have access to program resources.

Public or Program Screening

Prior to the end of the term in which you intend to graduate, you must plan a screening of your thesis film to the public or to students and faculty in the program to take place no later than the semester following your graduation. While your film's final post-production process might not yet be complete (such as adding an original music score, color correction, sound mixing, etc.), each student must be able to screen a semi-final, or final, version of their work.

We expect you to deliver an exhibition-quality export of your finished film, preferably both DCP files and an H264 file (locked picture edit, final and main end credits in place, final sound mix and final color correction) to the Equipment Room. Please also provide the most current marketing images and graphics, as well as any behind-the-scenes or promotional materials you wish to share. Your materials will be digitally stored in NSCM Images, and clips from graduate work may be used by the program for promotional and marketing purposes.

Body of Work Option

Students also have the option of fulfilling the feature film thesis requirement by producing a body of work in their chosen modality that is determined to be equivalent to a feature-film production by their thesis committee. The appropriate requirements for each student's body of work will be different and should be established by the thesis committee prior to the Thesis Proposal. Bodies of work should demonstrate advanced professional competence in the student's chosen production approach and provide evidence of considerable depth of knowledge and achievement in this practice. Historical approaches to the body of work thesis requirement have included:

- Non-theatrical film and video installations

- A series of experimental shorts, essay films, or web series
- A television series pilot episode
- Mixed media practices (such as a series of shorts and installations)

Expectations on feature-length run-times

According to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the American Film Institute and the British Film Institute, a feature film runs for more than 40 minutes, while the Screen Actors Guild asserts that a feature's running time is 60 minutes or longer.

Narrative/Fiction

Based on these criteria, you should discuss and establish minimum run-time expectations with your Thesis Chair and committee no later than the fall semester of your second year. The Graduate Faculty, in general, will consider a feature film to be at least longer than 40 minutes, but your Thesis Chair may expect and require your film to be 60 minutes or longer, in line with the Screen Actors Guild.

Students making predominantly non-fiction films may opt to produce a body of work that, as agreed upon by their Thesis Chair and committee, would be approximately equal or greater, in run-time, to 40 minutes. The student, Thesis Chair, and committee may consider that, in exceptional cases, labor-intensive or especially complex processes may result in or innovative work that warrants a shorter run-time. Your Chair and committee must approve such exceptions.

Program and Institutional Policies

Special Leave of Absence

Students who anticipate that they may not be able to enroll continuously due to external circumstances should apply for [Special Leave of Absence](#). Specifically, students who are taking courses should apply for a Special Leave of Absence when they cannot enroll in more than two consecutive semesters. Students who are in thesis/dissertation hours should apply for a Special Leave of Absence when they cannot enroll in every semester (including summer).

To qualify for a Special Leave of Absence, the student must demonstrate good cause (e.g., illness, family issues, financial difficulties, personal circumstances, recent maternity/paternity, employment issues). The specific reason for the Leave of Absence request must be indicated by the student on the [Leave of Absence Form](#). Due to current U.S. government regulations, international students must be enrolled every fall and spring semester. For students in this category, a Special Leave of Absence is only available for documented medical reasons.

Academic Standards/Conduct/Integrity

The [Graduate Catalog lists university policies](#) for classroom decorum and conduct, in addition to academic standards. Students are responsible for maintaining classroom decorum appropriate to the educational environment.

Social Media and Interactions Policy

Our program is at its best when students and faculty show mutual respect to each other, especially when we have our differences. We encourage candor, honesty, and free expression while expecting everyone in the graduate program to be respectful of each student, faculty, and their work, in face-to-face and online interactions including all social media platforms, by refraining from degrading, malicious, hateful, or discriminatory language and treatment. Any faculty member who receives a formal complaint of this policy is required to notify the Graduate Coordinator immediately who will bring the issue to administration or a panel of Graduate Faculty who will determine an appropriate course of action. Evidence of violating this policy will lead to immediate probation or dismissal from the program.

Accommodations

The MFA in Feature Film Production program welcomes and strives to accommodate students with diverse abilities. All classes must follow course accessibility policies. If you believe that the program can be made more accessible to you, please reach out to the graduate coordinator to determine how, together, we can best and reasonably accommodate you.

Students should connect with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) <<http://sas.sdes.ucf.edu/>> (Ferrell Commons 185, sas@ucf.edu, phone 407-823-2371). For students connected with SAS, a Course Accessibility Letter may be created and sent to professors, which informs faculty of potential course access and accommodations that might be necessary and reasonable.

Types of accommodations facilitated by Student Accessibility Services can be easily accessed here:

<https://sas.sdes.ucf.edu/accommodations/>

Academic Integrity (RCR) Training Requirements

All students admitted to graduate programs must complete training designed to promote an awareness and understanding of the fundamental principles of academic integrity, ethical scholarship, and responsible conduct in research and creative activities.

To fulfill this requirement, graduate students must complete the asynchronous ethics module as part of the Grad Launch online orientation by the deadline established by the UCF College of Graduate Studies. Students who do not complete the required training may be subject to registration holds or other academic consequences in accordance with university policy. Please see [Academic Integrity website](#) for details.

Grad Launch: Required Graduate Orientation Modules

The College of Graduate Studies (CGS) requires all incoming graduate students to complete the Grad Launch orientation modules. You will gain access approximately one week after accepting your offer of admission and must complete them before the end of your first term. The modules take approximately 45–60 minutes to complete. A \$35 Orientation fee is applied to all incoming students in degree seeking programs. A hold will be placed on your student account until completion of the modules and payment of the fee, at which point it will be automatically removed within 48 hours.

If you completed the Grad Launch modules for a graduate degree at the same degree level and have been actively enrolled in that program within the last three terms, you may be exempt from this requirement. For questions or help accessing the modules, visit the [Grad Launch website](#) or contact the College of Graduate Studies Grad Launch team at Gradorientation@ucf.edu.

Assessment of Progress at MFA Critiques

MFA Critiques are held at the end of the fall and spring semesters. Students are each required to prepare a presentation to graduate faculty and guests about their progress on the thesis project. Critique events are also an opportunity for students to discuss current challenges they are facing with the project, either creatively or logistically, for feedback from an audience broader than the members of their thesis committee.

Student presentations are grouped by year (third year all together, then second year, then first year all presenting together). Presentations should be brief but should contain enough detail to assure faculty that you have met program benchmarks. Presentations may consist of PowerPoints, film clips, photos, handouts, whatever you wish to present that will convince us you are making progress. You may invite key creative crew members to participate or answer questions from faculty. MFA Critiques are a valuable opportunity for all MFA students to receive critical feedback at each stage in their progress through the program. Attendance is required for all current MFA students unless you can provide a reasonable excuse for not attending.

Course Attendance

Each course has attendance policies that must be followed, and, in some courses, if you miss more than two classes, it is very likely you will earn an unsatisfactory or failing grade. In the case of mixed modality courses, it is your responsibility to keep track of face-to-face meetings and any schedule changes that result from unpredictable events (such as hurricanes, etc).

Academic Probation

Students who are not meeting program benchmarks or making academic progress may be placed on academic probation. All students should familiarize themselves with Academic Probation and other policies listed within the [College of Sciences Graduate Policies and Procedures](#).

Program Expulsion

The following circumstances may result in the student's expulsion from the MFA Program:

- Student fails to meet benchmarks or make progress to the extent he/she cannot be removed from Academic Probation
- Student blatantly ignores policies and procedures outlined in the Program Handbook
- Student blatantly ignores policies and procedures outlined in the Film

- Operations Production and Exhibition Handbook (including appendices)
- Student knowingly operates their production outside the insurance policy provided by the school or purchased by the student
- Student exhibits a pattern of untrustworthy behavior or dishonest communication with their Thesis Advisor, Graduate Program Coordinator, or Film Operations Manager
- Student fails to adhere to a warning about any of the above

Appeals/Grievances

The UCF College of Graduate Studies allows for petitions of university requirements and their academic matters. Academic matters are those involving instruction, research, or decisions involving instruction or affecting academic freedom.

The academic grievance procedure is designed to provide a fair means of dealing with graduate student complaints regarding a specific action or decision by a faculty member, program or college, including termination from an academic program. Academic misconduct complaints associated with sponsored research will invoke procedures outlined by the Office of Research.

Students who believe they have been treated unfairly may initiate a grievance. The procedure provides several levels of review, and at each level of review, the participants are further removed and have a broader outlook than where the grievance originated. Procedures for initiating an academic grievance can be found at The Golden Rule www.goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/ (see section 11).

More information can be found in the [Academic Grievance](#) section under General Graduate Policies in the graduate catalog.

Classroom/Laboratory Use

Film Operations

Film Operations is a full-service technological and logistical unit charged with supporting students who are engaged in the production and/or the exhibition of a film/video project. The principal point of contact for Film Operations is the service desk located inside of the Film Equipment Room - Nicholson School of Communication and Media Building, Room 157 (aka Film Operations Desk, or FOD). Please call (407) 823-2138, email filmoperations@ucf.edu, or visit Film Operations online at [The Data Frame](#).

Equipment and Facilities

Film and Mass Media is housed in a purpose-built Broadcast and Film Production Facility with a dedicated pre-production suite, specialty classrooms, studios and sound stages, recording booths, editorial rooms, computer labs, and screening rooms. A multimillion-dollar inventory of film and video production equipment is available to support projects large and small. Additional information on production insurance, set safety guidelines, and how to procure equipment and facilities for your production can be found in the NSCM Film Production and Exhibition Handbook located in the [Policies and Procedures section](#) of [The Data Frame](#).

All MFA Students must read and abide by the [Production and Exhibition Handbook](#) and its Appendices regarding insurance disclosures and parameters.

Communication

In order for Thesis Advisors and the Graduate Coordinator to monitor and assess the completion of principal photography on a narrative feature film, the student is obligated to include their Thesis Advisor and/or the Graduate Coordinator (depending on the time of year the production takes place) in various production milestones, which include production meetings and the completion of production paperwork. These specific production milestones are addressed below and may be adjusted based on the needs of individual projects, as negotiated by the student and their Thesis Advisor.

Student Responsibility for University Communication

UCF uses email as the official means of notifying students of important university business and academic information concerning registration, deadlines, financial assistance, scholarships, student accounts (including tuition and fees), academic progress and problems, and many other critical items for satisfactory completion of a UCF degree program. The university sends all business-related and academic messages to a student's university email address to ensure that there is one repository for that information. Every student must register for and maintain a @ucf.edu email account and check it regularly to avoid missing important and critical information from the university. Any difficulty with establishing an account or with accessing an established account must be resolved through the [UCF IT Support Center](#) so that a student receives all important messages. Additionally, each student must have an up-to-date emergency e-mail address and cell phone number by which to be reached in case of a crisis on campus. This emergency contact information will be used only for emergency purposes. Also, both permanent and local mailing addresses must be on the record, so that any physical documents that must be mailed can be delivered.

It is critical that students maintain and regularly check university email account for official announcements and notifications. Communications sent to the university email address on record will be deemed adequate notice for all university communication, including issues related to academics, finances, registration, parking, and all other matters. The University does not accept responsibility if official communication fails to reach a student who has not registered for, or maintained and checked on a regular basis, their university email account. Please ensure that this information is current and that any changes in contact information are made online through the myUCF portal at <https://my.ucf.edu/>.

Continuous Enrollment

All graduate students are required to enroll in at least one semester of every three consecutive semesters in order to maintain active student status. Failure to enroll in 3 consecutive terms results in being discontinued from the program. After doctoral student passes the candidacy exam, they are required to enroll in dissertation hours for at least one semester of every three consecutive semesters in order to maintain active student status. The institutional policy from the graduate catalog around continuous enrollment could be provided in this section: Continuous Enrollment and Active Students.

ACCESS matters.

Purpose: We envision UCF to be a fully accessible campus and inclusive environment for people with disabilities. We do this by:

- **Acknowledging** disability as an aspect of human diversity;
- **Cultivating** awareness of the environment's disabling barriers;
- **Collaborating** on and proactively facilitating accessible environments and experiences;
- **Educating** faculty and staff to create and maintain access in their spheres of influence;
- **Shifting** to an inclusive-minded attitude;
- **Supplementing** with reasonable accommodations as a last resort measure to ensure access.

Nondiscrimination & Accommodations Compliance

The University of Central Florida considers its students, faculty, and staff to be a strength and critical to its educational mission. UCF expects every member of the university community to contribute to a respectful culture for all in its classrooms, work environments, and at campus events.

Title IX prohibits sex discrimination, including sexual misconduct, sexual violence, sexual harassment, and retaliation. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find resources available to support the victim, including confidential resources and information concerning reporting options at <https://letsbeclear.ucf.edu> and <http://cares.sdes.ucf.edu/>.

If there are aspects of the design, instruction, and/or experiences within this course that result in barriers or accurate assessment of achievement, please notify the instructor as soon as possible and/or contact [Student Accessibility Services](#).

For more information on Title IX, accessibility, or UCF's complaint processes contact:

- Title IX – [Office of Nondiscrimination & Accommodations Compliance](#) & [ONAC email](#)
- [Student Accessibility Services](#) & [SAS email](#)
- [Student Complaints and Appeals](#)
- [University Compliance and Ethics](#) & [Compliance and Ethics email](#)
- [Ombuds Office](#)

Enrollment in Thesis Hours

Generally, a student begins taking thesis hours in spring or summer of year two. Once a student has begun taking Thesis Hours (FIL 6971) they must continue to do so each term until graduation, but they may break up their 10 required Thesis Hours any way they choose. If your thesis advisor is not on contract over the summer and you need to take thesis hours, a member of your thesis committee can sign off on your registration form. The student's Thesis Advisory Committee must be approved by the College of Graduate Studies before the student is allowed to enroll in thesis hours.

Students wishing to enroll in fewer than 3 credit hours must have approval from their advisor. Students who need to interrupt their dissertation work for extenuating circumstances must submit a [Leave of Absence Form](#) to the College of Graduate Studies. Submission and approval of the form must be obtained prior to the first day of classes for the term of non-enrollment.

Golden Rule

The Golden Rule is the university's policy regarding non-academic discipline of students and limited academic grievance procedures for graduate (grade appeals in individual courses, not including thesis and dissertation courses) and undergraduate students. Information concerning The Golden Rule can be found at www.goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/. Section 11, Student Academic Behavior, addresses appeals of graduate program

actions or decisions.

University Policy 4-412 Student Academic Appeals

University Policy 4-412 Student Academic Appeals is the university's policy regarding grade appeals (not including thesis and dissertation) and academic program appeals for graduate and undergraduate students. Information concerning University Policy 4-412 can be found at [Policies website](#) in the Academic Affairs section.

Grading and Grading Procedures

Details about grading systems can be found in the [Grade System](#) section within General Graduate Policies of the grad catalog. As well as the Incomplete Grades Section within Academic Progress and Performance Policy under General Graduate Policies.

For details on earning grades of Incomplete and other academic progress policies, visit the [Academic Performance and Progress](#) section in the Graduate Catalog.

Harassment

Discrimination on the basis of race, sex, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital status, parental status, veterans status, sexual orientation, or genetic information is prohibited.

Sexual harassment, a form of sex discrimination, is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature including any of these three situations.

1. Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or enrollment.
2. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment or enrollment decisions affecting such individual.
3. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's work performance or enrollment, or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or academic environment.

Sexual harassment is strictly prohibited. Occurrences will be dealt with in accordance with the guidelines above and university rules. Employees, students, or applicants for employment or admission may obtain further information on this policy, including grievance procedures, from the ONAC Coordinator. The Director of the Office of Nondiscrimination & Accommodations Compliance is the campus Equity Coordinator responsible for concerns in all areas of discrimination. The office is located on the main campus, in Barbara Ying CMMS Building 81, Suite 101. The phone number is (407) 823-1336. Policies and guidelines are available online at <https://onac.ucf.edu/>.

International Students

For information about the types of employment available to international students, and the requirements and restrictions based on visa type, see the [UCF Global](#) website.

Academic Integrity

Understanding plagiarism is essential to the academic integrity of both programs and the institution. Programs can use this section to describe their philosophy and approach to plagiarism. Description of the consequences of plagiarism can also be included. Link to the [Academic Misconduct Policy](#) here. Reference to the required Grad Launch Orientation Essentials modules that cover these topics. This is offered by the College of Graduate Studies and is required for all incoming graduate students. Students will be admitted to Grad Launch one week after they matriculate and will be required to complete it before the end of their first semester.

Students can be directed to the [College of Graduate Studies Grad Launch website](#) for information on the requirement and topic.

Time Limits to Degree Completion

A student has seven years from the date of admission to this program to earn a Master of Fine Arts degree, however, it is expected that full-time students will complete the program in three years. Full-time students who have not received a green-light on their thesis proposals by the fall of their third-year face program probation.

Refer to the [Time Limitation and Continuous Enrollment Policy](#) in the Graduate Catalog.

Transfer Credit

For the Transfer of Credit Policy refer to [Transfer Credit](#) in the graduate catalog

Review for Original Work (iThenticate)

The university requires all students submitting a thesis or dissertation as part of their graduate degree requirements to first have their electronic documents submitted through iThenticate for advisement purposes and for review of originality. The thesis or dissertation chair is responsible for scheduling this submission to iThenticate and for reviewing the results from iThenticate with the student's advisory committee. The advisory committee uses the results appropriately to assist the student in the preparation of their dissertation.

Before the student may be approved for final submission to the university, the dissertation chair must indicate completion of the Review for Original Work through iThenticate by signing the Dissertation Approval Form.

Additional Program Details

Financial Aid Funding

Merit-based Funding Opportunities

Applicants who meet the January 15th deadline are automatically considered for Graduate Teaching Assistantships, the Dean's Fellowship, the MFA Provost's Fellowship, and the Summer Mentoring Fellowship. The fellowships are reserved for incoming degree-seeking graduate students who plan to enroll full-time. More information can be found on the [College of Graduate Studies Funding Website](#).

Students with qualifying assistantships or university-wide fellowships will receive financial packages that include an assistantship or fellowship stipend, tuition remission, and health insurance. Qualifying fellowships are accompanied by tuition waivers. Qualifying assistantships include single appointments of at least .50 FTE (20 hrs/week) or two appointments of at least .25 FTE (10 hrs/week). Tuition remission is in the form of either tuition waivers or tuition payments that cover in-state (resident) tuition. Non-resident students with financial packages are not charged out-of-state tuition or the non-resident financial aid fee.

Availability of Funding

In recent years, we have been able to successfully nominate students for 1-2 fellowships and to appoint 1-2 teaching assistantships. In any given cohort, only 2-4 total applicants are typically awarded either fellowships or assistantships. If you did not receive funding from our program, you are encouraged to apply for assistantships in other programs and areas that are often advertised through email lists for graduate students. Occasionally, part-time positions in NSCM become available for graduate students, which may involve teaching or assisting with administration, but these do not come with tuition waivers or health insurance.

Financial Assistance

If you are interested in applying for loans or externally funded need-based awards, visit the [Office of Student Financial Assistance](#) website and complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which is available January 1 each year.

Graduate Assistantship Details

Graduate students may be appointed as graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) to carry out responsibilities as classroom teachers (instructors of record), co-teachers or classroom assistants, graders, lab assistants, or other roles directly related to classroom instruction as their assistantship assignment. Mandatory training requirements must be met for a student to be hired in the position of Graduate Teaching Associate, Assistant or Grader. The training, offered by UCF's Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning, covers course design, learning theories, ethics, and other topics relevant to preparing GTAs for their responsibilities. Training is free of charge, and we recommend ALL graduate students take advantage of it, whether they have teaching assignments or not.

Please visit the [College of Graduate Studies](#) website for more information on the training requirements and to register.

Students who are non-native speakers of English and do not have a degree from a U.S. institution must pass the SPEAK test before they will be permitted to teach as Graduate Teaching Associates or Graduate Teaching Assistants. The SPEAK test is not required for students who will be appointed as a Graduate Teaching Grader. Additional information including how to register for the test can be accessed through the [College of Graduate Studies](#) website.

GTA Performance Assessments

At the completion of each semester in which a student is employed as a GTA, the student's faculty GTA supervisor will meet with the student and complete the GTA Performance Assessment Form. These assessments are intended to facilitate and document the mentoring of graduate student teachers, promoting a review and discussion of the strengths and weaknesses in the student's performance in preparation for future employment.

Vacation and Leave Expectations

Expectations concerning vacations, days off and leave vary greatly depending upon the assistantship type and the details of the individual circumstances. Please speak to your supervisor at the beginning of your appointment to clarify what these expectations are.

Financial Support Requirements

Graduate students must meet certain requirements each term that they receive fellowships or assistantships. In brief, to receive and maintain these types of financial support packages, a student must:

- maintain good academic standing (above a 3.0 GPA)
- be enrolled full-time

A more detailed description of the financial support requirements can be found on the [College of Graduate Studies Funding](#) website.

Graduate Presentation Fellowships

The College of Graduate Studies provides Presentation Fellowships for students to present their research or comparable creative activity at a professional meeting or conference. To review the award requirements and apply online, see [Presentation Fellowship](#).

Graduate Student Associations

The Graduate Student Association (GSA) is UCF's graduate organization committed to enrich graduate students' personal, educational and professional experience. To learn more or get involved, please visit facebook.com/groups/UCFgsa/. For individual department or graduate program organizations, please see the Graduate Coordinator.

Professional Development

The Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning

The [Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning \(FCTL\)](#) promotes excellence in all levels of teaching at the University of Central Florida. FCTL provides classes and programs designed to assist graduate students with the educational issues they face in the classroom as teaching assistants or as instructors. These resources include assistance in course design and syllabi development, learning theories, and the use of different technologies in the classroom or on the internet.

Pathways to Success Workshops

Coordinated by the College of Graduate Studies, the Pathways to Success program offers the following free development opportunities for graduate students including workshops in Academic Integrity, Graduate Grantsmanship, Graduate Teaching, Personal Development, Professional Development, and Research. For more information and how to register, please visit graduate.ucf.edu/pathways-to-success/.

Student Research Week/Student Scholar Symposium

The Student Scholar Symposium will feature poster displays representing UCF's diverse colleges and disciplines.

The Student Scholar Symposium is an opportunity for students to showcase their research and creative projects and to receive valuable feedback from faculty judges. Awards for best poster presentation in each category will be given and all participants will receive recognition.

The College of Graduate Studies and the Graduate Student Association invite all UCF students, community, and employers to attend the Student Scholar Symposium. For more information, visit [Student Research Week](#).

Job Search

UCF's Career Services department offers a wide range of programs and services designed to assist graduate students. These services include evaluation and exploration of career goals, preparation for the job search and job search resources. To learn more, visit their website at career.ucf.edu/.

For specific services or resources provided by the academic program, please contact the graduate program coordinator or academic advisor.

Graduate Student Center

UCF is fortunate to have its own Graduate Student Center. It is a great place to relax, practice a presentation in one of our conference rooms, have your lunch, and to meet other graduate students. Some of our graduate students have scheduled their proposals and defenses in the conference rooms at the center. Visit [Graduate Student Center](#).

Forms

There are many different forms associated with being in your program and a graduate student at UCF. This is the administrative side of completing a degree. Many of the forms you will need to complete and submit to the graduate program coordinator can be found in the NSCM Feature Film webcourse and at this link: [Forms](#).

Graduate Excellence Awards

Each year, the College of Graduate Studies offers graduate students who strive for academic and professional excellence the opportunity to be recognized for their work. The award categories include the following:

Award for Excellence by a Graduate Teaching Assistant

This award is for students who provide teaching support and assistance under the direction of a lead teacher. This award focuses on the extent and quality of the assistance provided by the student to the lead instructor and the students in the class. (Not intended for students who are instructors of record)

Award for Excellence in Graduate Student Teaching

This award is for students who serve as instructors of record and have independent classroom responsibilities. The focus of this award is on the quality of the student's teaching and the academic contributions of those activities.

Award for the Outstanding Master's Thesis

It recognizes graduate students for excellence in the master's thesis. The focus of this award is on the quality and contribution of the student's thesis research. Excellence of the master's thesis may be demonstrated by evidence such as, but not limited to: publications in refereed journals, awards and recognitions from professional organizations, and praise from faculty members and other colleagues in the field. The university award will be forwarded to a national-level competition sponsored by the Council of Southern Graduate Schools (CSGS) when the thesis discipline corresponds to the annual submission request.

For the nomination process and eligibility criteria, see the College of Graduate Studies administrative website: graduate.ucf.edu/awards-and-recognition/.

NSCM Graduate Student Awards

NSCM sponsors internal graduate student awards that are similar to the College of Graduate Studies awards. For more information, please contact the NSCM Graduate Student Services Coordinator (nicholsongrad@ucf.edu).

NSCM Graduate Student Travel Funding

All graduate students within NSCM are eligible to receive up to \$500 in travel funds per fall/spring term to assist in attending film festivals and conferences. Students may only receive funding once per semester and once per research paper/creative body of work. For additional information, please contact the NSCM Graduate Student Services Coordinator (nicholsongrad@ucf.edu).

Useful Links/Resources

- [MFA in Feature Film Production Program Website](#)
- [Nicholson School of Communication and Media Website](#)
- [College of Graduate Studies](#)
- [Academic Calendar](#)
- [Bookstore](#)
- [Campus Map](#)
- [Counseling Center](#)
- [CREATE](#)
- [Financial Assistance](#)
- [Golden Rule Student Handbook](#)
- [Graduate Catalog](#)
- [Graduate Student Association](#)
- [Graduate Student Center](#)
- [Housing and Residence Life](#)
- [Housing, off campus](#)
- [Library](#)
- [NID Help](#)
- [Pathways to Success](#)
- [Recreation and Wellness Center](#)
- [Shuttles Parking Services](#)
- [Student Health Services](#)
- [NSCM Film Equipment and Facilities Website \(The Data Frame\)](#)
- [Thesis and Dissertation \(ETD\)](#)
- [UCF Global](#)
- [University Writing Center](#)

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