

Research competition category

short film

LSE
FESTIVAL
2020

SHAPE THE WORLD

Can you convey your research to a diverse audience with a three-minute film?

Communicating your area of research with concision and dynamism is an essential skill. Film is an excellent medium in which to do this, whether this be through documentary or fiction, live action or animation, or even comedy or science-fiction. Filmmaking is, in itself, a source of knowledge: offering a new perspective on how to represent your work.

You don't need a Hollywood budget or a degree in motion-graphics, just a phone with a camera and some free editing software. What matters most is that you're able to express your research with clarity and creativity.

Judging criteria

Films will be judged by a panel against the following criteria:

1. To what extent does the film make use of sound, image and editing to convey the research topic?
2. Does the film demonstrate a strong link to theoretical, critical and cultural ideas developed in the research?
3. Is the research presented with clarity, creativity and depth?

Submission information

A maximum of one film may be submitted as part of a single exhibit from either an individual or a group. Your film must be:

- Maximum of three minutes long
- Minimum resolution 1280x720 pixels
- Ratio 16:9
- File Mov, MP4
- Do not include any logos, for example the LSE logo

How to enter your film

- Upload your file to WeTransfer <https://wetransfer.com/> and get a download link
- Complete an entry form at lse.ac.uk/researchcompetition
- Read the terms and conditions as you will be asked on your entry form to agree to them

The deadline for submissions is Monday 27 January 2020

Toolkit: how to make a short film

Concept development

The most important element of any successful film is its narrative. Before you think about anything technical, the first step is to develop a strong idea that will engage your audience. It's often easy to focus too heavily on equipment and resources and not enough time on devising a compelling narrative.

It's worthwhile looking at other short films to see how different subjects are explored. shortoftheweek.com has a large catalogue of films, including documentaries, that demonstrate a wide range of approaches.

Writing a short synopsis (otherwise known as a **treatment**) is a helpful means of planning your film. A treatment is a short document that describes the film in chronological order. This is not only the plot, but an account of what the film looks and sounds like.

Once you are happy with the treatment, try drawing a **storyboard**. Storyboards encourage you to think visually and, more specifically, how a sequence of shots connect to one another to create meaning. You don't need to be able to draw to successfully storyboard. What matters is that you can sketch out the visual elements of each shot, as well as organising the shots into the best order. Try these basic storyboarding templates:

<https://boords.com/storyboard-template#video-storyboard-templates>

Equipment

Producing films can be an expensive venture. However, the budget of a film isn't directly proportional to its quality. For example, in recent years a number of Hollywood filmmakers have rejected large scale production cameras in favour of iPhones. In 2015 Sean Baker directed *Tangerine* on an iPhone 5 while in 2018 Steven Soderberg directed *Unsane* on an iPhone 7 Plus. With this in mind, here are some entry level equipment and tips for ensuring you get the best out of what you have.

Camera: A standard smart phone is more than sufficient for recording. It's worth looking at the recording features of the phone. Many devices now have some manual functionality that gives you more control of the look of a shot. For example, it's possible to lock the exposure on most devices so the camera doesn't automatically brighten or darken the image. These are some helpful pointers:

<https://www.pocket-lint.com/phones/news/131351-10-tips-for-recording-better-video-with-your-smartphone>

The quality of the image largely depends on the **location**. Try to find spaces that are well lit, but be wary of shooting into light sources as this can be problematic.

Composition is key. These guidelines show some of the best ways to produce visually engaging images:

<https://nofilmschool.com/2015/09/9-composition-techniques-make-images-eye-catching-biological-level>

Sound: Bad sound recording is distracting and annoying. When conducting interviews it is important to keep the microphone as close to the interviewee as possible (within a metre or so). This may be a case of recording the audio on a separate device. Try to record in settings that have minimal extraneous noise and/or echo. A cheap and effective tip for recording voice over is to create a make-shift sound booth under a duvet.

Editing: There are a number of good editing platforms. Most iPhones and iPads have iMovie, which is excellent entry-level editing software. For Android users there is Adobe Premiere Clip, which is also free. For those wishing to edit on a PC, Windows Movie Maker is an easy to use editing option.

Examples

Here are some good examples:

- This video essay about video essays:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1GXv2C7vwX0>
- *Island of Flowers* is a great film that is about social inequalities and the economy (a good example of a film with a social science theme, albeit longer than 3 minutes): <https://vimeo.com/53862971>
- A short film about LSE professor Ben Voyer's work on self-construal theory:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w1PREJm4_ZA&feature=youtu.be&list=PL4EFCA10EF3FF901F