The Film & TV Educators Network

GUIDE TO FILM FESTIVALS

A non-exhaustive list of UK film festivals, as well as tips and guidance for young filmmakers.

FESTIVALS ACROSS THE UK

- Glasgow Film Festival (Feb/Mar) (BAFTA, BIFA)
- Glasgow Short Film Festival (Mar) (BAFTA, BIFA)
- Manchester Film Festival (Mar) (BAFTA, BIFA)
- Northampton Film Festival (Mar)
- Beeston Film Festival (Apr) (BIFA)
- Flatpack Festival (Birmingham, May) (BAFTA, BIFA)
- Kinofilm Festival (Manchester, May)
- Romford Film Festival (May)
- Fisheye Film Festival (High Wycombe, May)
- Carmarthen Bay Film Festival (Llanelli, May) (BAFTA)
- Brighton Rocks International Film Festival (Jun) (BIFA)
- Ramsgate International Film & Television Festival (Jun) (BIFA)
- Edinburgh International Film Festival (Aug) (BAFTA, BIFA)
- Encounters Film Festival (Bristol, Sep) (BAFTA, BIFA)
- Wigan and Leith Short Festival (Sep) (BIFA)
- Bolton International Film Festival (Oct) (BAFTA, BIFA)
- Purbeck Film Festival (Oct)
- Cambridge Film Festival (Autumn) (BAFTA, BIFA)
- Aesthetica Short Film Festival (York, Nov) (BAFTA, BIFA)
- Norwich Film Festival (Nov) (BAFTA, BIFA)
- Cornwall Film Festival (Nov) (BIFA)
- Birmingham Film Festival (Nov)
- Southampton Film Week (Nov)
- Foyle Film Festival (Derry, Nov) (BAFTA, BIFA)
- Margate Film Festival (Nov)
- Belfast Film Festival (Nov) (BAFTA, BIFA)
- Cork International Film Festival (Nov) (BAFTA, BIFA)
- Leeds International Film Festival (Nov) (BAFTA, BIFA)
- Wildscreen Festival (Bristol)
- Oxford International Film Festival (Dec) (BIFA)

FESTIVALS IN LONDON

- London Short Film Festival (Jan) (BAFTA, BIFA)
- Crystal Palace International Film Festival (Mar) (BIFA)
- London Independent Film Festival (April)
- Rainbow International Film Festival (May/Jun)
- Walthamstow International Film Festival (Jun)
- Raindance Film Festival (Jun) (BAFTA, BIFA)
- Portobello Film Festival (Aug/Sep)
- The Smalls (Sep) (BIFA)
- British Urban Film Festival (Oct) (BAFTA, BIFA)
- Wimbledon Shorts Film Festival (Oct) (BIFA)
- The Shortest Nights (Sep) (BIFA)
- BFI London Film Festival (Oct) (BAFTA, BIFA)
- UK Film Festival (Nov)
- London Film Week (Dec)

SPECIALIST FESTIVALS: GENRE

ANIMATION

- Manchester Animation Festival (Nov) (BAFTA, BIFA)
- Animex International Festival of Animation and Computer Games (Middlesbrough, Nov)
- London International Animation Festival (Nov/Dec) (BAFTA, BIFA)

DOCUMENTARY

- Sheffield Doc/Fest (Jun) (BAFTA, BIFA)
- London International Documentary Festival (Mar/Apr)
- Open City Docs Fest (London, May) (BAFTA, BIFA)

COMEDY

- London Comedy Film Festival (May) (BAFTA)
- Short Com (Sep/Oct) (BAFTA, BIFA)

FASHION

London Fashion Film Festival (Oct/Nov)

HORROR

- DeadNorthern (Harrogate, Sep)
- The Dead of Night Festival (Merseyside, Oct)
- IFI Horrorthon (Dublin, Oct)
- Grimm Fest (Manchester, Oct)
- Romford Horror Film Festival (Feb/Mar)
- Horror on Sea Film Festival (Southend-on-Sea, Jan)
- FrightFest (London/Glasgow)

SCI-FI

- Sci-Fi London (Jun) (BIFA)

SPECIALIST FESTIVALS: REPRESENTATION

- BFI Flare (Feb) (BAFTA, BIFA)
- Oska Bright Film Festival (Brighton, Mar) (BAFTA, BIFA)
- Queer East (London, May)
- Deaffest (Wolverhampton, May) (BIFA)
- S.O.U.L. Fest (London, Aug/Sep) (BAFTA, BIFA)
- Women X Festival (Darlington, Sep) (BIFA)
- Iris Prize LGBTQ+ Film Festival (Cardiff, Oct) (BAFTA, BIFA)
- Scottish Queer International Film Festival (Glasgow, Oct) (BAFTA)
- UK Jewish Film Festival (London, Nov) (BAFTA, BIFA)
- Women of the Lens (London, Nov)

SPECIALIST FESTIVALS: GLOBAL

- London Indian Film Festival (Jul)
- London Greek Film Festival
- London East Asian Film Festival (Nov)
- London Korean Film Festival
- UK Asian Film Festival (Spring)
- London Spanish Film Festival

YOUNG FILMMAKERS: UK FESTIVALS

- Festival of Short Film (formerly Pennine Film Festival, Salford, Jan)
- Watersprite Student Film Festival (Cambridge, Mar) (BIFA)
- Leeds Young Film Festival (Apr)
- Scottish Youth Film Festival (Oct)
- London Breeze Film Festival (formerly Barnes Film Festival, Oct) (BIFA)
- Wicked Wales International Youth Film Festival (Autumn)
- Cinemagic Film Festivals (Belfast, Dublin)
- Into Film Annual Awards & Film of the Month Competition (London)

ALSO FOR YOUNG FILMMAKERS: INTERNATIONAL FESTIVALS

- Sarasota Film Festival (Florida, Apr)
- National Film Festival for Talented Youth (Seattle, Apr)
- Fresh Film Festival (Limerick, Spring)
- Atlanta Film Festival (Spring)
- Student International Film Festival (Rijeka, Nov)
- Anchorage Film Festival (Alaska, Dec)
- MICE Festival (Valencia)
- Olympia International Film Festival (Athens)

PROGRAMMERS & JURORS Q&A

Notes from panel discussion with Liza Fletcher (Director, Walthamstow International Film Festival), Mariko Francombe (Co-Founder and Director, Fisheye Film Festival), and Oli Loveday (Filmmaking Coordinator, Into Film) at the Film & TV Educators Network's *Frame Forward* event 8 July 2025.

What do programmers look for?

- When looking at submissions from young people, the panellists will expect a certain level of technical proficiency (eg. a clear 3-act structure, good-quality sound and visuals), but what they will be on the lookout for is a standout story and creativity.
- Programmers also look for clarity of voice and authenticity. What does your film say about you?
- Shaky visuals are forgivable, but bad sound will make or break a film. When you are shooting, don't cut corners when it comes to sound.
- Aim for a variety of shots and locations. For a documentary, for example, do you have to stage all your interviews in a classroom, or can you consider the local park or high street as a backdrop?
- A good short film should be focused, and not try to do too much. One way of thinking about it is as an answer to a question: what is the question your film is asking, and what answer does it provide?

What subjects are popular right now?

- The panelists noticed some changes around popular subject matter and mood over the last few years: they received more dark or post-apocalyptic themes around the pandemic, and a few more comedies since (though these have also had a dark tone). In terms of subject matter, there has been an increase in submissions about mental health and internal journeys. Other popular topics include gender identity, environmental themed films, relationships/coming of age and migration stories.

Submission advice:

- For your press kit, make sure you refine the following: a portrait-orientation poster, a one-liner, and a 150-words blurb which will attract audiences (avoid spoilers!). Trailers are less important for short films.

PROGRAMMERS & JURORS Q&A

Submission advice (con't):

- Establish a social media presence for your film. If you are accepted in a festival, post about your screening date(s), tagging the festival/venue. Also make sure to include credits and handles of everyone who contributed: this will help with networking, and also potentially with finding future work.
- Think about your audience: who is your film for? Who will want to go and see this, and which festival might they attend? For teachers, a useful classroom activity would be to get students to try and classify their films using Netflix category codes.
- Always check the submission guidelines carefully. For example: the Into Film platform is aimed at young audiences, so projects submitted for their competitions should avoid offensive language, excessive violence or drug taking.

For aspiring curators:

- Programming is a 'dark art', and often learned through trial and error. For teachers: can you support your students to curate a film night or festival at your school? For students interested in this, other key ingredients to consider are: the current film landscape, wider cultural trends, demographics of your local audience base, and whether you want your event to have a broad approach or niche.

Don't just submit to festivals, get involved:

- For both aspiring filmmakers or those interested in programming/curation, researching local film festival(s) and getting involved is strongly recommended: volunteering at a festival is a great way of getting inspiration, meeting like-minded collaborators and developing key soft skills such as organisation, communication and reliability. It also looks good on a CV, demonstrating a passion for the medium.

PRESS KIT CHECKLIST

A press kit is a promotional package of key information about your film. Also referred to as an EPK (Electronic Press Kit), as they are increasingly presented in digital format. Each festival will have their own requirements, so make sure you do your research, but most press kits will include:

Project Overview:

This can be collated on one pdf document. Festivals may also ask you to enter some of this information on the application form/portal when you submit your film.

- Film Title
- Key image: an attention-grabbing image which best encapsulates your film
- Country / Language
- Month & year of completion/release: when the film is ready for festivals
- Running time
- Logline: a one-sentence summary of your film, which should be as catchy as possible - see further advice from Film London.
- Synopsis: A more detailed (but not too long, aim for 150-200-words) summary of your film.
- Genre & theme(s)
- Contact: the name and email of the contact point for all queries related to the film. Make sure you check that email regularly.
- Director's statement: an explanation of the director's vision and the project's creative journey, which can take the form of a Q&A. Why do you want to tell this story now? What are the key themes? How was the process of making the film?
- Awards/Reviews/Testimonials: update these throughout your festival run

- **Tech specs**: Colour or B&W; aspect ratio; camera the film was shot on
- **Key Credits:**
  - Cast & Crew bios: Short biographies (50-100 words) of key contributors
  - Credits: the list of all the cast & crew
  - Production company logo (for students, this is likely your School/University)

Media Assets:

- Stills/BTS (Behind-The-Scenes) shots & footage
- Posters and key art
- Trailer and/or teaser trailer

FURTHER RESOURCES:

- You can find numerous examples of industry-standard press kits online, for example on the Magnolia Pictures website, or the New Zealand Film Commission (NZFC) and UniFrance film directories (look up individual films and then scroll down to the bottom of the page - press kits will usually be available there). This is also a great short film EPK example. NZFC also have a really comprehensive Short Film Festival Marketing Guide.
- Film Freeway is the platform used by many film festivals for submissions, which also includes curated lists of festivals. A great place to start your research.
- Film data specialist Stephen Follows's website has a section dedicated to film festivals.

FINAL TIPS:

Ready to start submitting your film into festivals? Here's some final thoughts to get you started:

- **Do your research**: which festivals do you want to enter? How many? Do the festivals require premiere status? What is the submission fee? How does your film suit each festival? Think about your genre: if you have a genre film, look into festivals that specialise in the same genre.
- **Start early**: do your research and prep as early as possible to give you enough time to enter into all the festivals that interest you. Most festivals charge more to enter your film closer to the deadline, so it pays to be early!
- **Polish the title, synopsis, and descriptions**: At the very least, perfect your title. Countless films are submitted with generic, overused titles. The title is how you make your first impression and make your film festival submission stand out, so use it to your full advantage. Similarly, all text descriptions should be thoughtfully written. You've poured all the hard work into your film, now, just put your best foot forward.

Guide compiled by Laura Boswell (Director of Careers & Alumni at LSA), with contributions from Poppy Coggins (Head of Production Management at LSA) and Alice Guilluy (Programme Lead, The Film & TV Educators Network). With huge thanks to Film & TV Network members for their thoughts and feedback. Updated July 25.

The Film & TV Educators Network