School of Theatre, Television & Film
Frequently Asked Questions
about petitioning into the TFM - Production emphasis

1. Q: What should I say in my Personal Statement?
A: Write persuasively and passionately about who you are and what draws you to this major. We are not looking for a biography of your life, but you can write about your passion and interest for the art, craft, and nature of film and television. Writing about projects you have worked on, internships, classes you have taken, etc., will make your statement more personal. The more specific you are about your focus and your career goals, the stronger your statement will be. This is a chance for you to distinguish yourself from others who write: “I’ve loved movies since I was 7 years old. My favorite director is Steven Spielberg. I want to direct features and win an Academy Award”. This program requires substantial commitment beyond just doing the minimum that is required. We want to get an idea of your commitment and willingness to put in the extra effort. Support your statement with experience you’ve had, accomplishments or projects you have worked on. Correct spelling and proper grammar are required.

2. Q: How many creative samples should I submit?
A: These samples should represent what you are capable of doing. Visual samples are the strongest choices: these can be film or video clips; stills or photographs, drawings, renderings, graphic art, etc. Choose the few pieces that you feel show you at your best, strongest, most creative. For screenwriters, you may also submit your screenplay or teleplay. For video, we’d like to encourage submitting 2 examples of your strongest work --approximately 5 minutes is fine. It is not a good idea to submit just 1 work in your creative sample.

3. Q: How do you want my visual samples presented?
A: A link to a Vimeo or YouTube clip is best, but make sure the quality is sufficient to be able to judge your work. If the video is password protected make sure to include the password in your application information. We will also accept flash drives with movie files on them. Make sure they are in a common format that plays on a Mac. If you are submitting creative samples other than videos, the best way to deliver them depends on what they are. Scripts can be uploaded to the File Exchange area of your Blackboard area. (Which you access when you submit your Request to Apply Form) Pdfs and image files can also be uploaded, but make sure the file sizes are not so large that uploads and downloads become problematic. You are also welcome to submit hard copies to the TFM office, as outlined in the application.

4. Q: How long/detailed should my samples be?
A: Short clips are best. Select moments that you feel are representative of your strongest work in the piece. For instance, if you have made a 20-minute movie, edit it to show two or three moments you are especially proud of. Also, be sure to indicate exactly what you did on the production on the label and on the cover sheet. Make sure all of your materials are labeled clearly and include your name.

5. Q: May I use the equipment in the School to put together my samples of creative work?
A: No. We have a limited amount of equipment and must keep it available to undergraduate and graduate students in the major. However, even inexpensive camcorders can deliver good quality images and you can probably find one to borrow from friends or neighbors. Another option is to take a course from a Community College that provides equipment. This may give you access to equipment, people to help you with your project and valuable feedback.

6. Q: What is a treatment?
A: A treatment is written to convey an idea so that the reader can visualize the story. Therefore, we are looking for a document that demonstrates your ability to visualize, and then convey, a story. For example, if your story is Goldilocks and the Three Bears, you might want to describe what Goldilocks is seeing and feeling rather than just saying that she walked into the Bear's house. If you can paint the picture in a visual way (how we would see it) rather than just a description, all the better. In other words, "As Goldilocks pushed open the door to the Bear's house, her heart was racing. She could see three chairs and three bowls of porridge on the table. Goldilocks kept looking over her shoulder, because she knew that the Bears could come back home any minute... but she was frightfully hungry. Goldilocks was afraid to go inside, but the porridge just looked so delicious. She took one more look behind her and then slipped inside." As you can see, there are elements that give the reader the emotion that Goldilocks is feeling and elements that visually describe what a camera would see (shot of Goldilocks peeking in door, shots of bowls of porridge, etc.). The treatment should present the story visually rather than just describing the action (Goldilocks went inside and saw three bowls of porridge is merely descriptive). We are not looking for an epic film, think of this as the film you would want to make upon acceptance into the program and have exhibited in the TFM Student Film Festival.

7. Q: How should I write out my treatment? (format issues, length, detail)
A: Do not use screenplay format, this is a treatment and should be written more like a story. Format isn’t important, visual imagination is. Make sure we can “see” your characters. Make sure the point of your story is clear. Break out your story into visual moments or beats. Write actively. Choose a story that is simple and visual. Don’t rely on a lot of dialogue. Writing skills are important. Make sure your spelling and grammar are correct. A page or two should be sufficient. Think of this as telling us what kind of film you would want to make as part of the program. Mega blockbusters and overblown epics do not work as well as a story you might actually be able to film. Both narrative and documentary are acceptable forms.

8. Q: If my first petition is denied, how can I find out what to do for my second try?
A: Due to our commitment to maintaining the highest standards of education in a field that requires expensive technical equipment and small class sizes, we can only accept a limited number of applicants each term. Unfortunately, this means that many qualified applicants are not accepted. We seek diversity, talent, creativity, potential and commitment. Regrettably, we can’t personally critique and respond to each petition. However, you can use these guidelines to critique your own petition: If your GPA is at the low end of the range, other elements must be stronger to balance it out. In other words, your creative work or experience must be exemplary. Try to strengthen your creative samples. If you have not completed the pre-requisite courses, but are currently enrolled, your petition may not have been granted pending successful completion of the pre-requisites. Don’t apply a second time until you have all of the pre-requisites. If your package isn’t complete and organized, you aren’t presenting yourself in a professional manner and the
committee hasn’t seen you in your best light. Make sure that anyone who views your petition package can easily see who you are and what you have done.

Main reasons for denial of petitions:
  GPA BELOW 3.4 IS LESS COMPETITIVE.
  POOR SAMPLES. POOR WRITING. CURSORY LETTERS.
  LACK OF FOCUS AND DIRECTION. STUDENTS ONLY INTERESTED IN SCREENWRITING OR RADIO OR SPORTS BROADCASTING ARE GENERALLY BETTER SERVED IN OTHER PROGRAMS.

The competitive student will stand out in at least 3 of the required sections. (G.P.A., *Personal Statement, Letters of Recommendation, Creative Visual Samples, Treatment.*)