

Frequently Asked Questions

When are portfolios due?

Applications are due by 11:59 p.m. on Friday during finals week of the spring semester.

How do I properly export my video for online submission?

It is recommended that you export your file as an H.264 encoded file. WARNING: This process will take time! Do not wait until the last minute.

In Premiere Pro:

Choose File → Export → Media

Format → H.264

Preset:

-- In the Finestra Lab choose "H.264 for Projects Server"

-- Elsewhere you should choose either the "HD 720p 23.976" or "HD 720p 29.97" preset (depending on which preset matches frame rate of your project.)

You can also use QuickTime: Choose File → Export → Movie → 720p

After the export has completed, verify that it is in fact an H.264 file at 1280 x 720 (File→Get Info or CMD+i) and that it is your complete project (watch it).

IMPORTANT: Yes, your project may have been shot at 1920 x 1080 and you may be tempted to use that size for encoding. Please do not do so. Files at 1280 x 720 will be considerably smaller and easier for uploading.

Can I ask a Film-Video faculty member to review my submission materials before I apply?

In order to assure integrity, fairness, and impartiality in the admission process, students submitting a portfolio application to the film-video major are expected to assemble the portfolio without outside assistance from film-video faculty. It is an integral part of the self-presentation process for students to make their own decisions in selecting the creative work sample that they feel best represents their own creative abilities and interests, and to compose the creative writing exercise independently. Film-video faculty therefore cannot, and will not, review or comment on any portfolio materials outside of the official review process.

Why are only a limited number of students admitted to the program?

In order to maintain the "hands-on" philosophy of the program, we limit the number of students admitted to maintain a low student-to-teacher ratio in the production and craft courses, and to allow for maximum student access to equipment and facilities. The controls on the FILM major are not intended to exclude or limit access to the program, which runs counter to the mission of Penn State University, but to have a fair and equitable way to fill a limited number of seats.

How competitive is it to get in?

It depends on how many qualified applicants we get each year. If you show good academic progress, have done well in the pre-requisite courses (or their equivalents), and have a good portfolio that demonstrates basic technical and storytelling skills, your chances of being accepted are good as long as there is space still available. Unsuccessful applicants may re-apply for the following review cycle, but this will most likely delay your graduation.

Is there a GPA requirement?

There is no GPA requirement when submitting a portfolio, but a current advising transcript is required with the portfolio submission. This allows the committee to see that you are actively engaged academically and show potential for continuing to do well in our major.

Can I take courses in the Film-Video program without being a major?

The only courses open to non-FILM students are the pre-requisite courses COMM 150, 250 and 242. All other courses are open only to FILM majors.

Why must I take the pre-requisite courses?

The pre-requisite requirements are in place so that you understand what the major is about, the kind of courses to expect in the program, and are academically prepared to succeed in the major. You will also create potential portfolio pieces in COMM 242.

How long will it take to complete the FILM major?

The Film-Video major is designed as a four-semester program. Students will take 2 courses each semester. Typically, during their junior year, students take courses in two production modes as well as the required writing and technique courses. In senior year they will take at least one advanced production course and two to three craft courses (i.e., editing, screenwriting, directing, etc.). Students who apply to the major at the end of their third semester have more flexibility to study abroad or may finish the program early.

But I'm already a junior. Will I be able to graduate on time as F-V major?

Again, the Film-Video major is a two-year sequence of courses, but with careful planning you may be able to graduate with only one extra semester. You may be limited in your choices of courses depending on what is offered in a given semester. You should meet with an adviser upon acceptance to the program to map out a plan.

For students admitted to the University SU/FA 16 or later:

I have a 3.0 GPA, took COMM 150 and 242 and got B's in both. Why was I referred to Dean's review?

As a controlled major, all students requesting FILM are referred to Dean's review. If you meet the minimum requirements you are guaranteed approval and may start enrolling in FILM classes for the following semester once your major designation has been changed.

I have a 3.0 GPA, but I got a C in COMM 150. Does this mean I can't major in FILM?

To be considered for the FILM major, you must submit a portfolio for review during finals week of Spring semester.

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