

PRODUCTION GUIDE

MAKE YOUR FIRST FILM

So you want to make a film! This document constitutes a rough guide to making a film through OUFF (although every production is different and will vary based on a number of factors, including the scale of the project). All Oxford students are able to get involved with OUFF and make a film, regardless of your experience level.

This guide is divided into steps, but you should try to start the **casting, location, and crew** work immediately and in parallel. The steps are a general guide of how things may go, but you may decide to do them in a different order. Once you have a crew, you should start on the **shotlist and schedule**. These two should make a projected budget possible. Aim to have the first day's call sheet and the costume, props, and casting completed next, at least a week before the first shooting day.

STEP 1: SCRIPT

The first step to making a film is writing/obtaining a completed script. Most films made through OUFF are works of original writing. If you are not the writer, it is important to ensure that the rights have been secured.

If you want to workshop your script before you shoot the film, we have a few suggestions:

- Have some friends read it aloud so you can hear the dialogue
- Send it to your friends or crew members for feedback
- Put a call out on the OUFF Facebook group for a script editor
- Keep your eyes peeled for any screenwriting workshops we host!

(Note: one page of a script takes on average around 2 hours to film)

STEP 2: BUILD YOUR CREW

The team you build should reflect the requirements and scale of the production itself. For the most part, crew roles do not require previous experience. At minimum, you will need a Director, Producer, Director of Photography (DoP) (usually also the 1st AC), 1st Assistant Director (AD), Sound Recordist, Production Designer, and Editor. Some crew members may be able to fulfil multiple roles. You may find it helpful to also have a Script Supervisor/2nd AD, Assistant Producers, an Assistant Camera (AC), and Runners.

Description of crew roles:

- **Director:** The Director is in charge of the creative vision of the project. They sometimes double as a Producer and assist with organizational parts of the project as well. The Director is in charge of casting, supporting the actors in their roles, and will work with the DoP to create a shotlist.
- **Producer:** The Producer is the organizational head of the project. They are in charge of scheduling meetings and the shoots, as well as acquiring funding and securing permission to film in locations. Oftentimes the Producer is present on set as well to assist with whatever needs doing on the day and keeping the shoot on track.
- **Director of Photography:** The DoP works with the Director to create a shotlist and is in charge of the visuals and aesthetics of the shots. On set they operate the camera (with the assistance of the AC if there is one). This is one of the only roles that requires prior experience or familiarity with the technology – or someone who can teach them how to use the camera before the filming begins.
- **Assistant Director:** the 1st AD also helps with scheduling (and may schedule the shoot instead of the Producer). They work with the Director and DoP on the shotlist and then create a shot schedule, which they use to keep the shoot on track. They are in charge of set and keeping everything running and organized on the day – in other words, the Producer is in charge of the large-scale logistics, while the AD manages the day-to-day logistics.
- **Sound Recordist:** The Sound Recordist operates the sound equipment and boom pole.
- **Editor:** The Editor is in charge of editing the film in post-production. We recommend DaVinci Resolve (which is free to use). They may do the colour grading or you may choose to have a separate colour gradist. The Editor does not need to be on set but the Director should work with them to make sure that their vision is realised.

- **Production Designer:** The Production Designer looks through the script and decides on costumes and props. We recommend that productions do their best to source costumes and props from what the cast and crew already own to minimise production costs.
- **Script Supervisor:** the SS ensures that continuity is preserved between shots. They may do this through taking photos or marking props and blocking with tape (not visible in the shots). This is particularly important if a scene is being shot out of order or over multiple days.
- **Assistant Camera:** the AC assists the DoP with the camera on set.

- **Gaffer:** Also called the Chief Lighting Technician, this role is in charge of executing the lighting plan for a production. They work closely with the DoP to bring to life the look of the film.
- **Runners:** A Runner is a general assistant that undertakes whatever tasks need doing on set. This may be helping with lighting or 'running' to get things as necessary, such as new batteries. They ensure the smooth running of the production process. This is the most entry level position on a film set.

Note: OUFF requires that every set has a technical lead, which is a member of the crew who has the requisite experience to safely operate cinema-grade equipment. This is normally the DoP, AC, or Director, but it does not have to be.

STEP 2.5: BUILD YOUR CAST

For **university-age** actors, you can put an auditions call out on the OUDS and OUFF Facebook groups. These can be conducted through self-tapes or in-person auditions (or both).

For **older actors**, use Facebook pages for local actors and email local drama groups. A good place to start is the Oxfordshire Drama Network. We also recommend Backstage, where you can search for individuals and specify gender, age, ethnicity, location, etc. **Be very clear about the level of compensation** (ie. 'lunch and expenses only').

For **child actors**, some of the best places in Oxford to contact are APA Talent, Jigsaw Arts Management, and West Oxfordshire Academy of Performing Arts. Backstage is also a good place to search. They should be accompanied by a chaperone and may only be able to work a limited number of hours per day (and will likely only be available on weekends). Be sure to check in about whether expenses will be paid.

IMPORTANT (when working with child actors): Producers should familiarise themselves with rules surrounding Child Performance Licences, which can vary by local council: Oxford's are here:
<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/children-education-and-families/education-and-learning/performance-and-stage-licences>.

Producers should also create a consent form to be signed by the child and their parent/guardian/chaperone.

STEP 3: HAVE A PRODUCTION MEETING

For an efficient and productive first meeting, we recommend planning and sending out an agenda ahead of time to discuss elements of the equipment and funding bids. The necessary members in this meeting will be the Director and Producer(s), although it may also be beneficial to include the DoP/Technical Lead and Production Designer.

STEP 4: SUBMIT YOUR EQUIPMENT BID

At the start of every term, we open pitching for free access to our professional grade equipment. This requires a copy of the script, a breakdown of the budget, statements and bios from core members of the crew, and a risk assessment. For more information about the bid, process, and information required, please see the pitching section of our website.

This pitch is normally put together by the Director or Producer and will require coordinating with key members of the crew.

Note: The producer is responsible for making a projected budget. The easiest way to do this is to break down the budget into categories: food and drink, transport expenses, location fees, prop and costume purchase/hiring fees, equipment hiring fees, insurance (TBC), COVID expenses, and overall contingency (10-20%).

STEP 5: SOURCE FUNDING

One of the Producer's most important tasks is sourcing funding for the project. The funding bodies available to film productions are more limited than those for theatre productions (as the funds must be grants rather than loans). One of the easiest ways to source small portions of funding is to submit JCR motions to the colleges of crew and cast members involved (normally £50-£150 per college). You can email the JCR Secretary to find out more about the formatting and funding available, as each college differs. We recommend that you attend the motions so you can answer any questions about the production. Some colleges also have specific arts funds that can be applied to as well.

There are a few college drama societies that accept funding bids for film productions: Worcester College Buskins, Merton Floats (up to £50) and the New College Drama Society (up to £50). As film bids are relatively new and on a much smaller scale, there is no exact guide or requirements for a bid. We recommend including: a list of cast and crew; synopsis; statements from the Director, Producer, Director of Photography, and Production Designer, and a budget breakdown. This information is all included in bids for equipment, and so can be copied and formatted into a PDF for a funding bid.

The Cameron Mackintosh Drama Fund (CMDf) also accepts applications for film grants. Applications open during each term – the dates are circulated in the OUDS newsletter.

(Note: the OUFF committee is currently looking to expand the number of college drama societies that accept funding bids from film productions. If you think yours would be interested, please contact us at contact@ouff.org.uk).

STEP 6: ORGANISE LOCATIONS FOR THE SHOOT

At the same time as the funding is being sourced, the Director and Producer should coordinate on organising the locations for the shoot. For public locations (such as coffee shops and libraries), you will likely have to contact venues en masse and be flexible about working outside hours. Some universities venues are willing to accommodate film productions but only outside of term time. It is important to be proactive, as many locations will want to organise this weeks in advance. Conference Oxford is a good contact for university locations – they will circulate your request to multiple possible venues.

If you plan to film inside a college (in a public room or the outdoors), you need to contact the bursar for permission. You will also likely have to complete a risk assessment. In some cases, the college will ask that a member of the college also books the space.

When contacting locations (especially ones not part of the university), emphasise the fact that you are a student micro-budget (and non-profit) production, otherwise you might be expected to pay a lot in location fees.

STEP 7: HAVE A PRODUCTION DESIGN MEETING

During the pre-production process, the Director and Production Designer should meet to discuss costume and set design.

You can hire props and costumes from TAFF at very reasonable prices. Otherwise, try to use stuff you already own/can borrow or look in charity shops. If you can't do without something specific, you may need to make up for it elsewhere in the budget.

STEP 8: CREATE A SHOTLIST

Prior to the shoot, the Director and Director of Photography (and potentially the 1st AD) should meet to discuss the shotlist (they should also discuss desired visuals/aesthetics). The script should be broken down into scenes and shooting days. The shotlist can be organised into a table like so:

Scene #	Shot #	Shot description	Shot type	Camera movement	Lighting	Sound	Filming order
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A template and guide from Studiobinder can also be found here: <https://www.studiobinder.com/download-free-shot-list-template/>

The shotlist will help structure the shoot and keep it on track. From here, the 1st AD can create a shot schedule. They will organise the call times (and estimated wrap times) for each day, and manage the schedule (they may order the shots if this has yet to be done, and they will determine the amount of time permitted per shot). It will be the 1st AD's role to ensure that the schedule is adhered to.

A template and guide for a stripboard and shooting schedule can be found here: <https://www.studiobinder.com/tutorials-scheduling-getting-started/> <https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/downloads/film-production-shooting-schedule-template/>

A guide to call sheets can be found here (link to template at the bottom): <https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/create-better-call-sheet-with-free-call-sheet-template/> Note: leave plenty of time at the start of the day, an hour for lunch, and plenty of time at the end of the day to pack up.

STEP 8.5: SCHEDULE THE SHOOT

With a shotlist and shot schedule, the production team should have a better idea of the number of days needed and amount of time per day. You can now coordinate with the rest of the cast and crew and schedule the shoot. This may in part be limited to the availability of certain locations.

STEP 9: SHOOT

We wish you the best of luck with filming! We do ask that before your shoot begins the DoP (and Technical Lead) reaches out to our Head of Film so they can go over the equipment and we can confirm that the DoP is confident using the camera.

The actual filming should be fun, but it is also important to respect everyone's time, so do your best to stay on schedule! If you're interested in doing an Instagram takeover on the OUFF account one day during your shoot, please reach out to us. We would love to see what you are up to.

If at any point you have issues with the equipment or feel unsure about how to use or do something, please immediately contact our Film Department. We are here to help and are happy to walk you through everything.

Note: starting in Michaelmas, it will become required for every DoP, Technical Lead, and AC to attend a training session on how to use the camera prior to filming. These workshops are open to everyone, and we highly recommend that Directors attend as well.

Expenses

Food: The Producer should arrange food and snacks for the cast and crew (usually a meal deal plus fruit/snacks). Sugar is often helpful. **Ask for dietary requirements.** Try to keep costs low, as it adds up per head per day. **Multipacks / separately packaged food is best for COVID but is not environmentally friendly.** We typically recommend that you budget £3 of food per person for each day on set (batch cooking can be a way to lower this cost) .

Drink: Provide some water, but also encourage people to bring water bottles. For early shoots, budget to provide hot drinks.

Transport: You will need to pay for travel made for the production (i.e. crew/actors travelling to and from set or unit moves during the day). If you do not have access to a car, then unit moves are expensive if you take taxis. The kit is heavy. Location moves will also really slow you down.

STEP 10: AFTER WRAPPING / POST-PRODUCTION

A few notes about after you wrap...

Once you are finished with the equipment, contact our Film Department so they can come collect it. Make sure that you have downloaded all footage and sound off the SD cards (you may need an external hard drive). You must do this in a timely manner; the C Fast and SD cards are part of our package and stay with the equipment. Each production has the right to wipe all footage off the SD cards when they begin shooting.



For editing we recommend Davinci Resolve, which is free to use, but there are other options that are also free and accessible (ideally you should have an Editor appointed before you shoot). It might be worth doing research to find which would work best for you. If you are interested in colour grading, definitely do some research into that as well. For music, you could put a call out on the OUFF Facebook group or any music society groups for a Composer.

If you organise any screenings for the finished film, let us know! We would love to come see it and help promote it on our socials.

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to get in touch!

contact@ouff.org.uk