

DOCUMENTARY FEATURE FAQs

1. What are the dates to qualify for Best Documentary Feature?
The qualifying event must be completed between March 1, 2021 and December 31, 2021. The deadline to enter is November 1, 2021 at 5PM (PT).
2. My documentary feature is scheduled to be released at the end of the year, do I need to submit by November 1?
Yes. The submission form and booking dates must be submitted by the deadline.
3. My film had a planned theatrical release that was canceled due to the theater closures. What steps do I need to take for my film to be considered?
Please proceed to the Academy's submission site and enter the information of the intended theatrical release. You will need to upload proof of a planned theatrical release such as a theater letter/contract at the submission site.
4. I had an intended theatrical release but did not yet confirm the theaters or dates due to theater closures. What are my options?
Please email documentaries@oscars.org and detail your situation along with any documentation you may have for review.
5. How long do I have to qualify my movie?
You have two years from completing your film to qualify.
6. If planning to qualify by having a theatrical run, will I still need to complete both a Los Angeles and New York qualifying run?
No, for the 94th Oscars, documentary features will only be required to complete a qualifying run in one of the following locations: Los Angeles County, City of New York, the San Francisco Bay Area, Chicago, Miami or Atlanta.
7. Will my film be ineligible if it screens at schools and/or film festivals?
Public screenings at schools and film festivals do not affect the film's eligibility.
8. My film has been invited to take part in an online version of a film festival. Will I jeopardize my film's eligibility if I participate?
Film festivals that have been impacted by the coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic may provide films online through either a transactional pay wall or password-protected entry, which will not affect the films' eligibility for future Academy qualification.
9. I'm planning to do a qualified theatrical run, how much of my film can be shown publicly online or television?
Trailers and clips are fine as long as the footage totals no more than 10 minutes or 10 percent of the film's running time, whichever is less. If the movie released online due to theater closures please email documentaries@oscars.org with details and documentation of its cancelled theatrical plans for review.

10. Once I submit for Best Documentary Feature, is it automatically entered to compete for Best Picture and the craft categories?

No. Best Documentary Feature is a specialty category. In order to be eligible for Best Picture and all other craft categories, including Music, the film must complete a qualifying theatrical run and submit a General Entry application. Please note that Music has a separate application form.

11. If my film qualified by winning a qualified award, is it required to have a qualifying theatrical run?

No, by winning a qualifying festival award (see festival list for specific awards or other qualifications), the film is automatically eligible to be submitted in the Documentary Feature category. However, in order to be eligible for Best Picture and all other craft categories, including Music, the film must complete a qualifying theatrical run. Please note that the Music categories has a separate application.

12. What if my documentary is a country's official entry for Best International Feature?

If a documentary is a country's official selection, the movie is also eligible to enter Best Documentary Feature. A Best Documentary Feature form must be completed for consideration.

13. If my film qualified by winning a qualified festival award, is it required to be submitted within 30 days?

No, the 30-day rule is intended for films qualifying through a theatrical release to ensure we receive submissions throughout the year. We encourage film festival qualifiers to submit as early as possible, but the films are not held to the 30-day rule since there may be plans for a theatrical release later in the year.

14. I would like to name the executive producer as the second possible nominee for my film.

Only individuals with a director or producer credit are eligible to receive an Oscar in the Documentary categories. Everyone with a director or producer credit must sign off on the designated nominees when submitting.

15. The entry form only allows for two or three possible nominees, but another person who worked on the film deserves an award.

Upon submission, normally two or three individuals may be named as possible nominees for a documentary feature. In the event that the film advances to the shortlist, all producers will be vetted to determine the appropriate nominees for the film.

16. I filled out the form and made some mistakes. Will you make the changes?

It is your responsibility as the submitter to make sure that all information on the entry form is accurate. When you sign the entry form, you are agreeing that the information on the form is correct. If significant information needs to be revised after being submitted, the form will need to be edited, signed, and submitted again.

17. I submitted my film last year, but since then I've added new material or re-edited. Can I submit it again?

No. We do not accept works in progress; the version submitted to the Academy must be the final and definitive version of your film.

18. I submitted my film last year, but since then I've won an additional festival award. Can I submit it again?

No. The category rules only allow for a film to be submitted once for awards consideration.

19. My film was broadcast on television outside the U.S. before it opened theatrically in the U.S. Is it still eligible?
If the film received a theatrical release outside the U.S. before it was broadcast on television, and if the television broadcast was only outside the U.S., the film could still be eligible. Please contact the Awards Office at documentaries@oscars.org with details.
20. Does uploading my documentary feature to the Academy Screening Room automatically enter it?
No. The submitter must still show proof of its qualifying event. All movies entering the Best Documentary Feature category are required to upload their movie to the Academy Screening Room.
21. Once I upload my documentary feature is it automatically available on the Academy Screening Room?
No. Streaming content must be tested first. Submitters will be notified when testing has been completed and the movie is ready to make live.
22. How much does it cost to upload a documentary feature to the Academy Screening Room?
There is no cost for documentaries to be uploaded for the Best Documentary Feature category.
23. I've submitted my application but the status is pending on the submission site, is this normal?
Yes. We have a specific timeline when reviewing applications. We will reach out to the submitter if anything is missing or needs correcting.

DEFINITION OF A COMMERCIAL VENUE

To be considered a commercial motion picture venue for Academy Awards purposes, a theater must meet the following criteria:

1. Regularly show new releases
2. Charge admission
3. Have regular non-specialized programming open to the general public
4. Exploit and market films through regular listings and advertising
5. Generally, run films for seven consecutive days, with multiple showings daily

PRODUCER GUIDELINES

If a documentary film reaches the shortlist, all credited producers will be required to complete a Producer Eligibility Form describing the exact nature of the work they performed for the film. Working in close cooperation with a documentary director, a documentary producer's functions include active involvement in a majority of the following (each of which are not necessarily equally weighted):

1. Conceiving the underlying concept or selecting the material on which the production is based
2. Securing any necessary rights
3. Selecting and hiring any writers and collaborating on the development of the treatment/outline
4. Securing financing
5. Selecting and engaging the director, when applicable
6. Managing rights, clearances, insurance and all legal issues throughout production

7. Selecting and securing people to film/interview
8. Selecting and securing shooting locations
9. Selecting and briefing the cinematographer
10. Preparing the final budget
11. Preparing the shooting schedule
12. Selecting and securing all necessary production components, including equipment
13. Designing and managing production workflow
14. Selecting and briefing the editor and editorial staff
15. Supervising and approving day-to-day expenditures and cost reports as they relate to the final budget
16. Supervising the day-to-day operation of the production crew
17. Resolving day-to-day disputes and conflicts related to the production
18. Ongoing viewing and appraising of raw footage with the director and editor
19. Constantly evaluating the film's progress and need for additional shooting/interviews
20. Selecting and briefing the composer and/or music supervisor
21. Selecting and securing all post-production/editorial equipment and managing post-production workflow
22. Viewing and appraising all cuts
23. Spotting music and sound effects
24. Supervising the music recording session
25. Supervising all sound mixing sessions
26. Conceiving and approving titles and graphics
27. Approving the final print (film or digital)
28. Planning and securing distribution
29. Collaborating on the marketing, publicity and distribution plans for the motion picture
30. Collaborating on the plans for exploitation of the motion picture in foreign and ancillary markets

DCP THEATRICAL REQUIREMENTS

Digital Qualifications and Submission Rules

Most of the Academy's Award categories allow for eligibility for award consideration by means of digital presentation, as outlined in "Rule Two—Eligibility" in the Academy's "Rules for Distinguished Achievements."

Here is the language in Rule Two that applies to digital presentation:

"All eligible motion pictures must be publicly exhibited using 35mm or 70mm film, or in a 24- or 48- frame progressive scan Digital Cinema format with a minimum projector resolution of 2048 by 1080 pixels, source image format conforming to ST 428-1:2006 D-Cinema Distribution Master—Image Characteristics; image compression (if used) conforming to ISO/IEC 15444-1 (JPEG 2000), and image and sound files packaged as Digital Cinema Packages (DCPs) in the "SMPTE DCP" format. SMPTE DCP refers to SMPTE ST429-2 and related specifications. (Blu-ray format does not meet Digital Cinema requirements.)

The audio in a Digital Cinema Package (DCP) is typically 5.1 or 7.1 channels of discrete audio. The minimum for a non-mono configuration of the audio shall be three channels as Left, Center, Right (a Left/Right configuration is not acceptable in a theatrical environment). In addition to channel-based audio, object-based audio may also be present as an immersive audio bitstream.

The audio data shall be formatted in conformance with ST 428-2:2006 D-Cinema Distribution Master – Audio Characteristics and ST 428-12:2013, D-Cinema Distribution Master Common Audio Channels and Soundfield Groups. Immersive audio, if present, shall be formatted in conformance with SMPTE ST 2098-2:2019, Immersive Audio Bitstream Specification."

What does this mean for filmmakers?

The first thing that you will need is what is now called a Digital Cinema Package, commonly abbreviated as DCP. The SMPTE and ISO/IEC documents mentioned in the general rule are international standards that define the technical characteristics of the DCP. As a practical matter, you can rely on specialized digital cinema mastering facilities to provide you with a DCP that will comply with these standards. Your original image capture can be whatever you want (film, digital video, CGI, and so on), but ultimately you will need individual, "one per frame" digital image files for the compression step of the mastering process.

Once you choose a mastering facility, you may discuss with them the most efficient and cost-effective method of conversion for your project. Your finished DCP will be provided to you on a computer Linux-formatted HDD (hard disk drive)—typically a USB drive or preferably a universal 7200 rpm SATA drive in a CRU drive carrier.

OK. I have a DCP. What next?

For your qualification screenings, as defined in Rule Two and the special rules for the various categories, you will need to find a commercial theater equipped with a digital cinema projector that meets the requirements outlined in Rule Two, as well as a digital cinema server that will play the SMPTE DCP you have received from your mastering facility.

In practice, there are only two types of DCI-compliant digital cinema projectors that are acceptable for your qualification screenings. The first type uses DLP Digital Cinema technology licensed by Texas Instruments to projector manufacturers. Be sure your cinema has a true DLP Digital Cinema projector, one that has a minimum pixel count of 2048 x 1080, and not one of the industrial grade DLP projectors that typically have pixel counts of 1920 x 1024 with reduced color and other image performance characteristics.

There are several companies that manufacture digital cinema servers that meet the applicable SMPTE specifications and will play DCPs that are mastered according to these specifications.

These companies include:

- Dolby Laboratories
- Doremi Labs
- GDC
- DVS

Be sure the server system in your cinema can play a SMPTE DCP as defined in Rule Two above. If you are not sure, you may confirm with the manufacturer that the server you plan to use is "compliant" with the applicable SMPTE digital cinema specifications.

I've heard about encrypted DCPs and KDMs. What do these terms mean for me?

ENCRYPTED DCPS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. NO KDM KEYS.

The image size for a "Flat" 1.85 aspect ratio should be 1998 x 1080 or 3996 x 2160.

For a 2.39 "Scope" aspect ratio, image size should be 2048 x 858 or 4096 x 1716.

For 1.90 full container 4096 x 2160

Please fully specify your DCP aspect ratio in submission documents.

Please specify the Target Color Gamut Data (TCGD). We prefer X'Y'Z'

*** Please include only one version of one film per hard drive.*

Where can I find a mastering facility to make my DCP?

There are DCP mastering facilities worldwide. Please contact us for facilities in the Los Angeles area that can convert your submission to that of a legal DCP package playable on standard theater payout equipment.

*** Please note that the Academy is not responsible for fixing badly transferred data.*

Note: Facilities owning a DVS "Clipster" or "Fuze" product can create/author legal DCPs without encryption if enhanced with the DCP package option.

Note: There is also a non-encrypted DCP creation program that runs on Final Cut Pro 7 from Doremi Labs.

<http://www.doremilabs.com/products/cinema-products/final-cut-pro-plug-in/>

Remember, digital content on a hard drive is fragile. Please ship carefully.

For more info on DCI specifications and the state of the Digital Cinema progress, please go to:

http://www.dcinemovies.com/DCIDigitalCinemaSystemSpecv1_2.pdf

http://www.dcinemovies.com/DCI_Stereoscopic_DC_Addendum.pdf

And for up-to-date Digital Cinema goings-on visit: www.dcinematoday.com