



Research in Film Awards 2021 application guidance

1. Contents

2. Introduction.....	2
3. Award Categories.....	3
3.1 Best Research Film of the Year.....	3
3.2 Best Doctoral of Early Career Film of the Year.....	3
3.3 Best Climate Emergency Film of the Year (public category).....	4
3.4 Best Animated Film of the Year.....	5
3.5 The Inspiration Award (public category).....	6
4. How to apply.....	7
5. Eligibility.....	8
All categories: Basic eligibility.....	8
The Inspiration Award: Nominations.....	8
Non-public categories.....	9
Best Doctoral or Early Career Film of the Year category.....	9
6. Judging and assessment process.....	10
Successful entrants.....	10
Timeline.....	11
7. Awards.....	11
Awards ceremony.....	11
8. Terms and conditions.....	12
Judges and outcomes.....	12
Your participation and your data.....	12
9. Contact information.....	12

Document history

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2. Introduction

We're the Arts and Humanities Research Council. We're the biggest funder of arts and humanities research in the UK.

The Research in Film Awards is our annual competition to celebrate and reward the best short films produced as part of, or inspired by, arts and humanities research. We want to encourage researchers to use film to engage the public in their research, and for filmmakers to take an interest in arts and humanities research. We're hoping this will mean better arts and humanities research, and that it'll help make arts and humanities research more accessible to the public.

This is the seventh annual Research in Film Awards. In the past six competitions, we've seen documentaries, visual essays, experimental films, broadcast programmes, and many more. These films were made as outputs, as by-products, as records of research, as practice-based research (where making the film was the research), as collaborations, and others. There's been reconstructions and enactments, animations, installations and gallery pieces, games, and interactive storytelling. We see new formats and new ideas every year.

There are five categories, which cover lots of different kinds of films. Two of the categories are open to anyone. The only real restriction on format is length, as all entries must be less than 30 minutes long.

This year, our special category once more focuses on the Climate Emergency as the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) comes to Glasgow in November. Films entered into this special category will explore how the arts and humanities can offer unique perspectives and approaches to our understanding of the natural world and raise awareness of environmental issues. This category, together with the Inspiration Award, is open to the public meaning anyone can apply. The Inspiration Award is also open for nominations, where members of the public can enter or nominate a short film which has been the Inspiration Award and humanities research.

We give winners a trophy and a £5,000 prize for future filmmaking. If you're shortlisted, you'll be invited to our Awards Ceremony on Wednesday 1 December 2021.

We look forward to watching your research film.

3. Award categories

The Research in Film Awards 2021 have five categories:

- Best Research Film of the Year
- Best Doctoral or Early Career Film of the Year
- Best Climate Emergency Film of the Year (public category)
- Best Animated Film of the Year
- The Inspiration Award (public category).

You can enter a film in more than one category, provided you meet the eligibility criteria for each category. However, you must complete a [separate Smart Survey form](#) for each category entered.

3.1 Best Research Film of the Year

This category is for all films produced as outputs or by-products of arts and humanities research in the UK and is open to all those employed by AHRC-recognised Research Organisations in the UK (see section 5, Eligibility) at the time the film was completed, launched or made publicly available. Your film must have been completed or made available during the last year since 1 April 2020.

'Best Research Film of the Year' Assessment Criteria

The judges will be looking for films that:

1. Portray or represent excellent research
2. Bring new arts and humanities research to wider attention, and demonstrate a clear sense of who their public audience is
3. Showcase excellent practice in the dissemination of research findings
4. Display excellent technical film-making ability and make considered and appropriate use of the medium of film to 'tell or enhance their research story'
5. Highlight the value and importance of research, subjects or questions in the arts and humanities.

3.2 Best Doctoral or Early Career Film of the Year

This category is for all films produced as outputs or by-products of arts and humanities research by doctoral students and early career researchers (see Eligibility section for details). Your film must

have been completed or made available during the last year since 1 April 2020.

'Best Doctoral or Early Career Film of the Year' Assessment Criteria

The judges will be looking for films that:

1. Portray or represent excellent research
2. Bring new arts and humanities research to wider attention or new audiences, and demonstrate a clear sense of who their public audience is
3. Showcase excellent practice in the dissemination of research findings
4. Display excellent technical film-making ability and make considered and appropriate use of the medium of film to 'tell or enhance their research story'
5. Highlight the value and importance of research, subjects or questions in the arts and humanities.

3.3 Best Climate Emergency Film of the Year (public category)

This category is our 'special' category and for a second year running will focus on the Climate Emergency as the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) will be hosted in Glasgow in November 2021. In this Year of Climate Action, vital answers will be sought for the climate crisis and arts and humanities research will play a role in how we understand and respond to environmental issues.

The arts and humanities have shown they are vital for giving us the tools, as individuals and as society at large, to understand environmental change, to adapt and be resilient in the face of it, and to communicate the threats to our planet. Arts and humanities research can offer unique and essential perspectives and approaches to understanding weather, climate change, and natural history, each with important implications for the way we engage people in caring for and protecting their environment.

The Best Climate Emergency Film award is open to films that explore the links between the arts and humanities and the ongoing climate emergency. Films entered in this category might:

- Contribute to our cultural understanding of the natural world
- Raise awareness of environmental issues through film
- Help protect our natural heritage by understanding what cherished spaces mean to us, and why we value them
- Reveal how people have adapted during previous periods of climate change and offer lessons for the ways we could live in the future.

(this is by no means an exhaustive list).

This category is open to the public and recognises films produced in the UK which have been inspired by the arts and humanities. Entrants can be individuals, community groups, teams or collaborative groups who have been stimulated by arts and humanities research. Your film must have been completed or made available since 1 April 2020.

‘Best Climate Emergency Film of the Year’ Assessment Criteria

The judges will be looking for films that:

1. Bring new arts and humanities research to wider attention, and demonstrate a clear sense of who their public audience is
2. Are imaginative and showcase the stories and impact of climate change through the lens of the arts and humanities
3. Showcase excellent practice in the dissemination of research findings
4. Display excellent technical film-making ability and make considered and appropriate use of the medium of film to ‘tell or enhance their research story’
5. Are effective in translating stories and voices across disciplines.

3.4 Best Animated Film of the Year

Arts and humanities research touches everywhere, from the mundane everyday life of individuals to the mass movement of millions; from our shared histories to our most complex inner selves. With this vast tapestry of human experience to illustrate, it is no surprise that animation often has the greatest potential to bring arts and humanities research to life. This category recognises films that have creatively used animation to tell stories or explore ideas in arts and humanities research.

We define ‘animation’ as the output of any technique in which the illusion of a moving image has been created, as contrasted with a live-action recording. This could include traditional animation, stop motion animation, computer animation, mechanical animation, or other experimental disciplines. Photorealistic animation or live-action animated films (that combine animation with a live-action recording) will also be considered.

This category is for all videos produced as outputs or by-products of arts and humanities research in the UK and is open to all those employed by AHRC-recognised Research Organisations in the UK at the time the video was completed, launched or made publicly available (see section 5, Eligibility for more details). There must be a clear and demonstrable link to arts and humanities research. Your film must have been completed or made available during the last year since 1 April 2020.

'Best Animated Film of the Year' Assessment Criteria

The judges will be looking for films that:

1. Have creative, powerful storytelling
2. Bring new arts and humanities research to wider attention or new audiences, and demonstrate a clear sense of who their public audience is
3. Display excellent technical ability in animation and make considered and appropriate use of the medium of film and animation to 'tell or enhance their research story'
4. Have the arts and humanities at their core
5. Showcase research in the arts and humanities in an accessible way.

3.5 The Inspiration Award (public category)

This category is open to the public and recognises films produced in the UK which have been inspired by the arts and humanities. This could be as a result of attending an arts festival, visiting a museum exhibition, or through books, plays or performances which have helped to fire the imagination. The arts and humanities touch all areas of our lives and this award aims to recognise their value and importance to us all. Entrants can be individuals, community groups, teams or collaborative groups who have been stimulated by the arts and humanities. All films submitted must have been completed or made available during the last year since 1 April 2020.

'The Inspiration Award' Assessment Criteria

The judges will be looking for films that:

1. Have been inspired by the arts and humanities and which have creative – either real or imagined – representations in film
2. Bring arts and humanities research to wider attention or new audiences, and demonstrate a clear sense of who their public audience is
3. Convey a sense of the importance of the arts and humanities to our lives
4. Showcase research in the arts and humanities in an accessible way.
5. Display excellent technical film-making ability and make considered and appropriate use of the medium of film to 'tell or enhance their story'.

We also accept nominations for films in this category.

These nominations should include contact details of the nominee to enable the AHRC to access the nominated film for judging purposes.

Any nominations must be submitted with the knowledge and permission of the nominee(s).

4. How to apply

To enter the competition, you must complete our online [Smart Survey](#) form by 4pm UK time on Thursday 24 June 2021. You can enter a film in more than one category, provided you meet the eligibility criteria for each category. However, you must complete a [separate Smart Survey form](#) for each category entered.

By starting an application, you are not committed to submitting it. Equally, you can save changes as you go along and come back to it later. Your answers must be entered directly into the text fields provided – documents cannot be uploaded.

To complete the form, you will need to provide:

- Your name, the names of any collaborators, and details of your research organisation, if applicable
- A contact email address and telephone number
- A link to your film on the free online video service, Vimeo or alternative video hosting site (with a password, if your video is password-protected)
- A 300-word summary explaining your film's links with arts and humanities research, written in plain English, explaining the topical relevance of your film and your target public audience
- A 150-word summary of how you would use the prize money to fund future filmmaking.

Your film must be:

- No longer than 30 minutes, including titles and credits
- In English, or with English subtitles
- Uploaded to Vimeo or alternative video hosting site, and playable in a standard web browser
- Created, completed or made public since 1 April 2020
- Produced without direct input from the UKRI/AHRC Communications or Public Engagement teams.

Entries that don't meet these criteria, or that are submitted after the deadline, will be disqualified.

If your film is shortlisted:

- Your film must be made viewable to the public; in exceptional cases it is acceptable that a short 60 second clip or trailer is created which can be made available on the AHRC website
- Your film (or excerpts) will be screened at the RIFA ceremony on 1 December 2021, and the full film may potentially be screened in other locations around the UK during an AHRC film festival in late 2021/early 2022 (details tbc)
- An excerpt from your film must be made available on the AHRC website after the shortlist is available and on the AHRC's social media channels
- All winning films will be made publicly available on the AHRC website and on the AHRC's

social media channels shortly after the awards ceremony, unless an exception has been agreed as above

- You must be available for media and communications opportunities, typically from September to December 2021
- The AHRC will issue a press release announcing the shortlist and winners and require all those who have been nominated to share this press release with their academic institution or any relevant organisations that have been involved with the film.

If your film cannot meet these requirements (for example, due to intellectual property restrictions), your entry will be disqualified. If you have concerns that your film might include intellectual property that cannot be shared, please [contact us](#) as early as possible.

We reserve the right to disqualify any entries at any stage. We might do this, for example, if we find that:

- You are ineligible
- You misrepresented any part of your application
- Any part of your entry is fraudulent (for example, due to plagiarism or unauthorised use of intellectual property)
- You bring the scheme or the AHRC into disrepute.

This list is not exhaustive.

5. Eligibility

To submit your film into RIFA 2021, you must meet the eligibility criteria relevant to the category you are entering, as outlined below.

All categories: Basic Eligibility

To enter a film into any category of the Research in Film Awards, you must be:

- a UK resident, and
- Over the age of 18, and
- Not employed directly by the AHRC or UK Research and Innovation.

You can apply if you have entered before, but not with the same film unless it is substantially different to what you entered before.

There are no further restrictions on who may enter the two public categories – the **Best Climate Emergency Film of the Year** and the **Inspiration Award**.

The Inspiration Award: Nominations

We also accept nominations for the Inspiration Award. If you are nominating a film into this category, the nominee (research lead or director on the film) must also meet the basic eligibility

outlined above. Nominations must include the contact details of the nominee to enable the AHRC to access the nominated film for judging purposes. Any nominations must be submitted with the knowledge and permission of the nominee(s).

Non-public categories

To enter a film into any category other than the two public categories, at the time your film was released you must have been working or studying at a UK research organisation that is eligible to receive funding from UK Research and Innovation. Your organisation is eligible if it is either:

- A UK higher education institution that receives grant funding from a UK funding body, such as Research England, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, the Scottish Funding Council or the Department for Employment and Learning Northern Ireland, or
- A [research institute](#) which UKRI has established a long-term involvement with as a major funder, or
- An independent research organisation (IRO) which has been [awarded IRO status by UKRI](#).

You do not need to have a permanent contract of employment to be eligible.

We recognise that films often involve collaboration with broadcasters, community groups, cultural bodies and so on, which may sometimes span multiple countries, and as such awards can be made to teams as well as individuals. However, to enter a category other than the two public categories there must be an identified research lead who meets the eligibility criteria above.

You can find out more about your organisation's eligibility in the [AHRC Research Funding Guide](#).

Best Doctoral or Early Career Film of the Year category

In addition to the above criteria, to enter a film into the 'Best Doctoral or Early Career Film of the Year' category, you must be either:

- A doctoral researcher engaged in PhD research and registered as a doctoral student at the time the primary research for the film was completed, or;
- Within eight years of the award of your PhD, excluding any period of career break such as parental leave, caring responsibilities or health reasons, or;
- Within six years of your first academic appointment, excluding any period of career break such as parental leave, caring responsibilities or health reasons. This must be a paid contract of employment, either full-time or part-time, which lists research and/or teaching as the primary function, including research assistantships.

As with the other academic categories, you do not need to have a permanent contract of employment to be eligible, as long as you meet the conditions above.

6. Judging and assessment process

The films will be assessed in two stages, first by the AHRC and second by an external judging panel. The judging panel will represent diverse perspectives and specialisms from the arts and humanities research community and the Creative Industries, including academics and media and film industry experts. The judges will view films on a single 16:9 screen.

Judges will primarily be interested in the quality of the films submitted as considered against the assessment criteria outlined above for each category, but the accompanying text (300 words) will provide vital information about the film's links with arts and humanities research and therefore careful consideration should be given to the writing of these submissions. Please avoid jargon and make your application succinct and easy to understand.

Before we assess an application, the AHRC will check it for:

- Eligibility
- Research subject

Applications which don't adhere to these rules will be disqualified and will not progress any further. Incomplete, obscene or fraudulent entries will also be disqualified at this stage.

The AHRC will assess all remaining applications against the assessment criteria for each category to establish a longlist and assign an initial grade (1 to 6), where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is exceptional. The AHRC will then share the entirety of the longlist, excluding the applicant contact details (name/email address), with the judging panel. The judging panel will assess the longlist against the assessment criteria to establish a shortlist and assign a grade (1 to 6), where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is exceptional, and select the highest grading films that meet our assessment and eligibility criteria.

Unfortunately, due to the volume of applications, we are not able to provide individual feedback if you are unsuccessful at the application stage.

Successful entrants

Successful entrants will be notified if their film has been shortlisted in September 2021. If your film is shortlisted:

- Your film must be made viewable to the public; in exceptional cases it is acceptable that a short 60 second clip or trailer is created which can be made available on the AHRC website
- Your film (or excerpts) will be screened at the RIFA ceremony on 1 December 2021, and the full film may potentially be screened in other locations around the UK during an AHRC film festival in late 2021/early 2022 (details tbc)
- An excerpt from your film must be made available on the AHRC website after the shortlist is available and on the AHRC's social media channels

- All winning films will be made publicly available on the AHRC website and on the AHRC’s social media channels shortly after the awards ceremony, unless an exception has been agreed as above
- You must be available for media and communications opportunities, typically from September to December 2021
- The AHRC will issue a press release announcing the shortlist and winners and require all those who have been nominated to share this press release with their academic institution or any relevant organisations that have been involved with the film.

If your film cannot meet these requirements (for example, due to intellectual property restrictions), your entry will be disqualified. If you have concerns that your film might include intellectual property that cannot be shared, please [contact us](#) as early as possible.

We reserve the right to disqualify any entries at any stage. We might do this, for example, if we find that:

- You are ineligible
- You misrepresented any part of your application
- Any part of your entry is fraudulent (for example, due to plagiarism or unauthorised use of intellectual property)
- You bring the scheme or the AHRC into disrepute.

This list is not exhaustive.

Timeline

Activity	Date
Launch of call	Thursday 30 April 2021
Deadline for entries	Thursday 24 June 2021, 4pm UK time
All entrants notified	September 2021
Awards ceremony in London	Wednesday 1 December 2021

7. Awards

Winners in each category will win £5,000 and a single trophy. The cash awards should be invested in future filmmaking work and all entrants are required to state in their applications how this money will be used. We are not able to provide duplicates of winning trophies.

Awards ceremony

Awards in all five categories will be made and announced at an Awards Ceremony in London on Wednesday 1 December 2021. All shortlisted entrants will be invited, along with the judges, industry

dignitaries, and others.

8. Terms and conditions

This guidance, and these terms, constitute the rules of the Research in Film Awards. The AHRC reserves the right to alter or amend any of these rules or cancel the Awards at any time in their absolute discretion.

Judges and outcomes

We reserve the right to change one or more of the judges if necessary, at any stage of the competition. The judges' decisions are final. We will not enter into any correspondence regarding the judges' decision.

Your participation and your data

Your offer to participate in the Research in Film Awards is subject to continued acceptance of these conditions. By applying to the Awards, you accept these rules and guidance. You must supply full details as required and comply with all rules of the Awards.

You recognise that your application and personal data will be shared with the AHRC and, if longlisted the judging panel and, if shortlisted, a PR agency, for the purpose of administering the Awards. You should also note that if we identify a need to do so we may contact you at a later date for more information about you.

9. Contact information

For enquiries about this competition, please [email the AHRC Public Engagement team](#)