

# SELECTOR SCREENING GUIDELINES & FAQs

## Introduction

The British Council is the UK's cultural relations organisation. One of our roles is to introduce UK films and filmmakers to new international audiences in a variety of ways, including showcasing British films at international film festivals. As part of this, each year we invite selected international festival programmers to London to watch new British films at private, bespoke 'selector screenings'. We do this to give British films – big and small – the best opportunity to be programmed at some of the most prestigious international festivals.

Most years we host selector screenings for:

- ▶ **Belfast**
- ▶ **Berlin**
- ▶ **Cannes, Official Competition and Un Certain Regard**
- ▶ **Cannes, Directors' Fortnight**
- ▶ **Cannes, Critics' Week**
- ▶ **CPH:DOX**
- ▶ **Edinburgh**
- ▶ **Karlovy Vary**
- ▶ **Locarno**
- ▶ **Rotterdam**
- ▶ **San Sebastian**
- ▶ **Sundance**
- ▶ **Toronto**
- ▶ **Tallinn**
- ▶ **Venice, Critics' Week**
- ▶ **Venice Days**
- ▶ **Zurich**

Please note that this list is subject to change and we sometimes also provide screenings for additional festivals (including SXSW, Gothenburg, Busan and Tribeca) in any given year.

If you are a producer or sales company who wants to sign up to receive email alerts about our festival selector screenings, including when submissions open, please send your name and email address to [screenings@britishcouncil.org](mailto:screenings@britishcouncil.org)

---

# SELECTOR SCREENINGS GUIDELINES

---

## Eligibility

In order to screen through the British Council your film must be feature length (over 60 minutes) and a UK production or co-production. We provide a separate support programme for short films. Please see our [website](#) for details.

Each festival may also have its own additional eligibility criteria, especially around running time and premiere status. Please refer to the festival's own website for details.

The British Council does not pre-screen or pre-select the films submitted for selector screenings and we aim to show all films that are submitted to us. However, viewing is at the discretion of the festival programmer and occasionally, with especially popular festivals, there may not be enough time to watch every single submission. If for any reason your film is not screened you will be notified and the screening fee will be refunded.

## Submission Process

Please sign up for our selector screenings mailing list by emailing [screenings@britishcouncil.org](mailto:screenings@britishcouncil.org). You will then be notified when submissions for each festival open and receive instructions on how to submit your film. Once you've submitted a film, you will receive an automated email acknowledgement and this will be followed by a further email from the British Council Film team advising on delivery details and deadlines for receiving your screening material. In order to screen through the British Council you will also need to register the film for inclusion in our [UK Film Database](#). Following the screenings themselves you will be notified of the festival's decision and next steps, and given instructions for collecting your screening material.

## Fees

The British Council charges a fee to cover the cost of the selector screening programme. You will normally be required to pay this fee in advance as part of your submission. If, for any reason, the film is not screened, your submission fee will be refunded in full (usually within 14 days).

Selector Screening submission fee:

- ▶ **£75 + VAT for films without sales agent representation**
- ▶ **£125 + VAT for films with sales agent representation**

Because you're submitting through the British Council, you do not also need to pay the festival's own submission fee. If your film is shortlisted for further viewing by the festival's programming team, you will be provided with a waiver code by the festival so you can formally register the film with them. If you are asked to pay the festival submission fee as part of this process, the British Council will refund your selector screening fee. **You will never have to pay the fee twice.**

## Refunds

On some occasions it may not be possible to screen your film at our selector screenings and the British Council reserves the right to remove your film from the planned screening list. This may be for multiple reasons, including an unexpectedly large number of submissions, the programmer running out of time whilst in London, or that your film is not suitable for the section of the festival we are screening for (eg. there is a first/second feature requirement).

We will do our best to inform you as soon as possible if your film will not screen in London and why. We will also let you know of any next steps the festival would like you to take to submit directly to them.

At any point throughout the process you may also withdraw your film from the screening.

In the event of any of the above you will receive a full refund to the bank account which you made payment from. We expect refunds to take 14 days to process.

## Support

For enquiries about the selector screenings programme and support with submission, please contact [screenings@britishcouncil.org](mailto:screenings@britishcouncil.org)

---

# SELECTOR SCREENINGS FAQs

---

## **Does the British Council pre-screen and pre-select?**

No, we don't – we are not gatekeepers. Anyone who submits to us goes on the list to screen for the festivals. The festivals can determine what they watch first, and of course some of them will prioritise films from sales companies they know, and directors and producers they are familiar with. However, that doesn't mean films that come 'out of nowhere' don't have a shot. In fact, it is normally the reverse, as festivals typically are hungry to discover hidden gems, so they will watch everything regardless of who is or isn't connected. We try to show them everything that is submitted to us. Sometimes we have too many films and not enough hours to screen, and so run out of time to show everything on the big screen. If for any reason your film doesn't screen and they need to watch it on a link, we'll let you know (and you won't be charged a fee).

## **Why do you charge a fee for screening?**

The service we provide means that your film is being shown to senior programmers from some of the biggest international festivals on the big screen in a private environment, rather than being just viewed on a link via their main submissions process by festival pre-selectors.

The fee covers the cost of preparing the screenings, doing print traffic, liaising with the festivals, and paying for the screening room and projectionist. If the programmers don't manage to watch your film on the big screen, there is no fee charged.

We try to keep fees as low as possible and when you submit to us you DO NOT need to pay the festival's submission fee – you will only pay once.

## **I submitted to X Festival last year and got rejected but now I have a new cut, can I show to them again a year later?**

Usually not. If a film has been radically changed from the version they saw previously we can ask them, but usually festivals don't have time to watch films twice. So it is important to wait until your film is as close to completion as possible

## **Should I apply for every festival you screen for?**

Probably not, this will be time consuming and cost you a lot of money. It's worth thinking about which festivals your film might be best suited to. Submitting to Cannes and submitting to Busan are very different opportunities. And remember, there are lots of festivals that British Council don't generally provide screenings for (both key international festivals like SXSW, and UK festivals such as

Glasgow and London). There are hundreds, if not thousands, of great film festivals out there, and we only screen to a small number here in London.

## **Do I submit to the festival website as well as to the British Council?**

Usually not. In most cases you just register for the British Council's screenings, and then you only register with the festival directly if they shortlist your film. In this case we will provide you with a waiver code. Some festivals (like the Berlinale) ask that you register with them directly as well, in which case we will also supply you with a waiver code. You will never have to pay two submission fees.

## **What if my film is not finished?**

Programmers are accustomed to seeing work at various stages. Most usually prefer to watch a picture lock version even if there is sound and colour correction to be done, but this is not essential. Do remember, however, that if you rush to show a certain festival a very rough cut this year, they probably don't have time to watch it again next year when it's in a more polished version. If you are showing a festival a version of the film that isn't yet finished, it's worth including a title card at the beginning stating what work is still to be done. This helps the programmers understand what they're watching.

## **Do you showcase to UK events?**

Only very occasionally as we concentrate on showcasing British films to international festivals. We currently do screen for Edinburgh and Belfast festivals but there are a lot of other key events (from London to Glasgow to BFI Flare and Sheffield DocFest) that do champion UK talent but that you will need to submit directly to.

## **I want to submit to X Festival that's not on your list?**

If it's not on our list you should just look at their website for normal application procedures.

## **Can you help show my short?**

These selector screenings are only for features. Why? Because usually the programmers coming to London are the ones programming features and their colleagues who programme shorts don't make the trip. If you want advice about festivals strategy for your short film contact the British Council film team via [Films@britishcouncil.org](mailto:Films@britishcouncil.org). We do still love shorts, and our [Travel Grant Fund](#) in partnership with the BFI, does prioritise short filmmakers so if your short is selected for certain festivals we might be able to help you with the cost of your trip

---

# SELECTOR SCREENINGS FAQs CONT.

---

## What happens after the screenings?

If the festival allows us to provide immediate decisions on selection, shortlisting or rejection then we will do that within 48 hours. Some festivals like Berlin and Cannes are happy for us to give you an answer quickly. Some, like Toronto, will wait to tell you their decisions directly a few months later. We know waiting for an answer is the hardest part! So, if we can give you an answer ASAP, we will.

## Did they give you any feedback about my film?

99% of time they don't have time to give notes on any particular film. Remember they watch many thousands of films per year, and if they gave individual feedback that would take up half of their time. Of course, there are some cases where a programmer will want to get in touch with you directly about your film (we pass over contact information as needed) or in a very rare case they may give us a quick note or two to pass on to the filmmaker, in which case we'll do that immediately. But otherwise please don't ask for feedback.

## Can I come to the screening or talk to the programmers when they are in London?

The screenings are private and closed, so you can't attend. The programmers are busy watching films so we don't arrange meetings for them.

## Do you need my press notes?

No, please don't send photos or press releases – we only need your film. Instead we ask that you register your film details in our [UK Film Database](#). Programmers screening with us all use the one-page directory entry from our database if they want any background information.

## What formats do you screen on?

We can screen on DVD, Blu-ray or Quicktime drive (for the latter, that's usually a USB stick or a small Lacie-style drive). We do not screen from links (streaming or download). Only films represented by sales companies can screen on DCP.

## I submitted my film to your Database but it's not showing up?

Sometimes it takes a week or two for us to process our backlog of submissions. After that, check to see if your film is listed as 'in production'. We list films as 'in production' even if they are technically completed but haven't been seen by an audience yet. That way your film won't seem 'old' before its festival or theatrical premiere. Once you have a festival premiere, it goes into the main directory.

The general URL shortcut (unless another film has the same title) is: [film.britishcouncil.org/film-title](http://film.britishcouncil.org/film-title)

For example, [film.britishcouncil.org/the-ones-below](http://film.britishcouncil.org/the-ones-below)

## Is my film British?

We only hold screenings for British productions and co-productions. Please see the full criteria for submission on our [website](#).

For example, if your film was shot in the US but with British funding and talent, that would be fine for us. Or if you have an international director working on a British production, that's fine too. But if your film isn't British or partly British, please don't try to screen via the British Council.

## I still have questions, who do I talk to?

Send a mail to [screenings@britishcouncil.org](mailto:screenings@britishcouncil.org) and we'll get back to you.