Student groups guide to film screenings in the Students’ Union

Running a film screening can be a great way to get your society or committee together, with an event that’s a little different from a standard social. From a low-key screening in Gallery Room 3, to a full-on cinema experience in the Nelson Mandela Auditorium with Film Unit, you just have to throw in some popcorn and you’ve got a fun and inclusive event!

There are a number of different forms a screening can take and it’s important to make sure you know where you stand legally.

Commercial, fundraising and outdoor screenings will always require you to obtain a screening licence, whereas a free screening may be covered by the SU Film Bank Licence. Below we have outlined the guidance you need to know to hold any kind of film screening in the SU.

If you require any additional support or have any queries, please contact su-events@sheffield.ac.uk.

Hosting a free screening under the SU Film Bank Licence

The SU holds a licence with the national organisation Film Bank which covers us for free film screenings. You may choose to work with Film Unit on these screenings (for example if you want the ‘cinema experience’ in the Nelson Mandela Auditorium), however, you can also put on these events yourself across the SU.

For film screenings to be covered by the SU Film Bank Licence, there are a few conditions that must be met, outlined below.

Conditions of the licence

1. Advertising and publicity

Advertising for the screening event can only take place within the Sheffield Students’ Union building (e.g. posters, flyers, digital poster boards, programmes) and/or via society or SU emails/newsletters. No external advertising is permitted.

2. Screening requirements

The screening must:

- take place within the Students’ Union building (not outside the building or at a different venue)
- be free entry, with no charge to see the film
- be for university students
- have no commercial activity taking place at the event (such as a concessions stand or merchandise or other items for sale)
● have no fundraising activity taking place at the event, apart from exceptional circumstances with RAG buckets (see below)

3. Film choice

The film must:

● be a feature film, not a television or music programme
● be screened on DVD or Blu-ray
● be owned/distributed by Film Bank’s participating studios and distributors (for educational establishments). At time of writing, these are:
  ○ 20th Century Fox (inc DreamWorks)
  ○ Arrow Films
  ○ Disney Sony Pictures
  ○ Entertainment Film
  ○ Eros International
  ○ Icon Film
  ○ Kaleidoscope Film Distribution

Please check here for an up-to-date list.

● not be on the Film Bank Excluded Films list, available here.

Booking your venue

Unless you are working with Film Unit, you will need to book a space for your film screening to take place.

The Nelson Mandela Auditorium, View Rooms and Gallery Rooms 2 & 3 have projectors and are easily set up for film screenings (you may need a laptop or DVD player). Other spaces, such as Studio, the Gallery Presentation Area and Foundry, can be used for screenings but require technical support. To discuss your requirements, contact su-events@sheffield.ac.uk.

When booking your venue via Agora or at the Welcome Desk, you will be asked to fill in this form, confirming the following details about your screening:

● title and distributor of the film
● expected audience numbers
● that you have read this guidance
● that you believe the screening is covered by the SU Film Bank licence (and that there will be no charge to see the film and no commercial activity will take place) or that you have sourced/will be sourcing the appropriate licence for the screening

If you are unable to provide this information at time of booking, you must email su-events@sheffield.ac.uk to confirm this information before the screening goes ahead.
Tips for confirming the Distributor

If you are unsure who the distributor is, you can usually find this information on IMDb. Simply search for the film on IMDb and look at the Company Credits. For most films, it will show the worldwide distributors, so make sure you check the UK one. Alternatively, you can also search for the film on Film Bank (If it is on their database, they will list the UK distributor under the film’s details) or the BFI website (Click “Show More” on ‘Cast & Credits’).

Fundraising

While no fundraising or commercial activity can take place at your screenings, RAG bucket collections are permitted. However, these must be incidental to the event and there must be no expectation that donations are required from the audience in order to watch the film or to attend the event. Similarly, RAG bucket collections cannot be used as payment for foods, drinks or any other goods. To adhere to charity/VAT regulations, all bucket collections in the SU building must be booked and approved in advance by RAG. You can find more information on their rules and required timescales here.

Hosting a commercial, fundraising or free screening not covered by the SU Film Bank Licence

If the SU Film Bank Licence is not suitable for your event (perhaps you want to sell food, advertise outside the SU, show a film outside or show a film that is not owned by one of the specified distributors) you will need to source a licence. These tend to cost between £75 - £200 (although this can be higher).

The easiest way to do this is to work with Film Unit, your student-run cinema. They can host private and public screenings with you in the Nelson Mandela Auditorium and acquire the licence on your behalf. Contact them at film.unit@sheffield.ac.uk.

If you would rather hold a screening in an alternative space (such as a View Room) or without the support of Film Unit, you can source a licence yourself. You will want to obtain your licence as soon as possible as it can take some time, particularly for less mainstream films.

How to obtain a licence

You can source licences from Cinema For All, Film Bank (choose ‘Single Title Screening Licence’) or MPLC. Guidance on how to source a licence from these organisations is available on their websites, however do note that you may need to pay an additional fee to sign up with them. For example, Film Bank requires a £150 refundable deposit and Cinema For All requires a £95 membership fee, but all their films are a standard £85.

If your film is a little more niche or independent, you may need to contact the filmmakers or distribution company directly. If your film isn’t available via the companies listed above, the information might be available on the film’s website. If not, we recommend googling “[Film Name] screening licence”. You can also search for other screening events of the film in the UK and contact the event organisers to find out how they got the licence.
Rating guidance

Films screened in the UK must have a UK rating. A rating is the guidance provided by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) on the age appropriateness of the film (ie U, PG, 12A, 15, 18). Check your film is BBFC-rated by searching for it on the BBFC website. Once you know the rating, be sure to display it in any promotion for your screening, so that audiences know what kind of content to expect from the film before attending.

If your chosen film is not currently rated in the UK, please contact su-events@sheffield.ac.uk to discuss screening options.

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