

Film Programme Eligibility Validation Policy & Protocol
Updated 11.06.2026
Public Terms & Conditions

Next Review Date: June 2028

*This policy should be read alongside CIFF's **Artistic Policy** and **Pay the Artist Policy**, which together form an interconnected framework for how CIFF selects, supports and values artistic work.*

CIFF Policy Statement

This Eligibility Validation Policy establishes the framework through which the Cork International Film Festival (CIFF) ensures that all films selected for participation in the Festival meet its published Artistic Policy, eligibility requirements, artistic and ethical standards, premiere-status obligations, and rights and licensing requirements. The Policy is designed to support consistency, fairness, transparency, good governance, and effective risk management throughout the Festival's programming and selection processes. It applies to all Festival personnel, contractors, advisors, and decision-makers involved in programming, selection, validation, and related operational activities.

The Board of CIFF is responsible for ensuring that appropriate systems, controls, and resources are in place to support the consistent and transparent validation of programme eligibility, premiere requirements, ethical standards, rights clearances, and associated risk management processes as detailed in this document. The Board will receive assurance, through the Festival Executive and established governance mechanisms, that this Policy is being applied consistently and that any significant breaches, disputes, exceptions, or governance concerns are appropriately escalated and addressed.

This Policy shall be reviewed periodically by the Board to ensure continued compliance with applicable legislation, regulatory requirements, sector best practice, and the strategic objectives of CIFF.

All persons involved in the programming, selection, validation, and delivery of Festival activity are required to comply with this Policy and any related procedures issued under its authority.

1. Festival Submissions

All submissions to Cork International Film Festival (CIFF) must be made through the Festival's official FilmFreeway platform.

All Terms & Conditions for participating in the Cork International Film Festival are listed on the Festival's website and on the dedicated Film Freeway submissions platform, and are updated each season before submissions open in January. By submitting a film, the entrant confirms they have read and accepted these Terms & Conditions and are legally authorised to submit the work.

2. Film Form and Premiere Status

The Festival welcomes all forms of film production – animation, experimental, etc.

Entries are invited in the following film categories:

- Feature films (International -Fiction)
- Feature films (Irish - Fiction)
- Feature films (International - Documentary)
- Feature films (Irish - Documentary)
- Short films (International - Fiction)
- Short films (International - Documentary)
- Short films (Irish - Fiction)
- Short films (Irish - Documentary)
- Short films (Cork - Fiction)
- Short films (Cork - Documentary)
- All short films selected for competition will be Irish Premieres.
- All short films and all Irish feature films selected for non-competitive strands will be at a minimum Cork premieres.
- All feature films in competitive strands, and all new international feature films, will be at a minimum Irish premiere.

The following are not eligible:

- Promotional films
- Advertising content
- Tourism or charitable promotional films
- Music videos
- Films that are currently available to rent or purchase are NOT eligible; this includes DVD/Blu-ray/VOD formats.
- Films that were previously publicly screened, broadcast or otherwise made publicly available (including online) in Ireland are not eligible to the strands requiring Irish premieres.

Premiere Requirements:

- All short films selected for competition must be Irish Premieres.
- All short films and all Irish feature films selected for non-competitive strands must be at a minimum, Cork Premieres.
- All feature films in competitive strands, and all new international feature films, must be at a minimum, Irish Premieres.
- Films currently available publicly online, on VOD, DVD or Blu-ray are not eligible for premiere-restricted strands.
- Films previously publicly screened, broadcast or otherwise made publicly available in Ireland are not eligible for premiere-restricted strands.
- Premiere conditions do not apply to repertory cinema.

3. Completion Calendar

Short Films

To be eligible for short film competitions:

- Films must be completed after July 1st of the year preceding the Festival edition. -
- Films must be 40 minutes or less in duration.

Feature Films

To be eligible for feature film competitions:

- Films must be completed or premiered after December 1st of the year preceding the Festival edition.
- Films must be 41 minutes or longer.

For the out-of-competition feature and documentary sections:

- Films must be completed or premiered after September 15th of the year preceding the Festival edition.
- Films must be 41 minutes or longer.

4. Screening Formats & Delivery

Cinema Screenings:

For in-cinema screenings, the screening format eligible for inclusion is DCP. Where a DCP is unavailable, alternative screening formats may be considered, subject to prior agreement with the Festival.

Online Screenings:

For digital online screenings, the screening format eligible for inclusion is h264 1080p digital file.

Subtitles:

Films should be presented in their original versions with English language subtitles (or commentary where necessary). And to qualify for selection, all non-English language films must have an English-subtitled screening copy available.

Films submitted through the incorrect category may not be considered, and refunds will not be issued for submitted films.

5. Selection Criteria

Key criteria that come into consideration in our selection include: **authenticity, sincerity, connection, curiosity, difference, ambition, political and historical relevance, innovation, storytelling power, and technical craft.**

Festival programming decisions are final.

Selection and Communication:

- Filmmakers whose work is selected will receive an invitation by the end of September of the Festival's year.
- Rejected films will receive notification through FilmFreeway at the end of September. - It is not possible for the Festival to offer feedback regarding films that are not selected for the programme.

6. Screening File Delivery

- The preferred method of receiving screening materials for the Festival is via digital online transfer. If your film is selected for CIFF2026 but you are unable to send your film digitally, please do not send your film without contacting the Print Traffic team first.
- If selected, DCPs and screening files must be received by the Festival by Friday, 2nd October 2026, at the latest.
- Using extracts of the films and film stills for promotion: The entrant agrees that up to three minutes of their film may be used by the Festival in promotional activities, including screening a clip on television and social media, inclusion in the Festival's trailer, and on the Festival's website. Please ensure that uploaded stills and headshots are of print quality and that you have permission to allow the Festival to use these for promotional and press purposes in perpetuity.

7. Accessibility

CIFF is committed to accessibility and inclusion. Selected filmmakers may be asked to provide:

- Captioned versions
- Audio described versions
- Subtitle files

The Festival will work collaboratively with filmmakers and rights holders where possible to improve accessibility.

8. Ethical Standards

CIFF is committed to ethical cultural practice.

Across its operation, the Festival does not accept direct financial contributions from governments subject to comprehensive EU or UN sanctions, governments found by the International Court of Justice to violate international humanitarian law, or governments subject to relevant international findings or provisional measures relating to genocide, war crimes or crimes against humanity.

This policy also applies to films where such governments are credited as official production or distribution funders. This policy does not apply to filmmakers or artists based on their nationality.

All decisions are made using verifiable information and appropriate governance procedures.

9. Submission process and waiver requests

- Films are submitted via the online submission platform, FilmFreeway. Films sent in other ways may not be considered or receive a response. Exceptions are made for films dealt directly with sales agents, with the same eligibility criteria applying and requiring validation.
- Entrants do not send unsolicited screener (Vimeo, etc.) links to Festival staff, and do not appeal for fee waivers.
- Submission fees are necessary to finance a fair and thorough review process of the thousands of submissions we receive each year, as well as to support the costs of curation and film exhibition. If you wish to request a waiver regardless of the above, please email info@corkfilmfest.org with 'WAIVER REQUEST' in the title. Your email should clearly explain why you are requesting a waiver

and why CIFF is the festival where you specifically want your film to premiere. We will review these requests in a monthly internal meeting.

- If you are a cultural institution or college or have several films you would like to enter at once, the Festival may be able to offer a group discount; please email info@corkfilmfest.org to request. A fee waiver may be granted if the submitter has previously had their work in the Festival.

10. Rights & Responsibilities

- Acceptance of the Terms and Conditions detailed above implies that the entrant will abide by them in their dealings with the Festival and also that the entrant is legally entitled to submit the film for consideration.
- Entry to the Festival implies that the entrant has the right to do so, has pre-cleared all materials that comprise the film, and is an authorised representative of the team that holds the intellectual property in the film.
- The Festival reserves the right to withdraw invitations or remove films from the programme where Terms & Conditions are found not to have been met.

CIFF's Full Artistic Policy is available to view here: [CIFF2025-Artistic Policy-Aug 2025](#)