

F26.14 Animated Short Film Story Development

Overview

I'm developing a creative project focused on producing the complete preproduction package (storyboards, animatic, style guide) for an expected 2-5 minute animated short film. I'm seeking a student intern to produce this content and collaborate with me throughout this process. I plan to begin by facilitating a series of idea development sessions with a small group of volunteer students, using these workshops to pitch and refine possible story concepts. While I have a few film ideas of my own prepared, I would like to see if any strong student-led ideas emerge first, and to choose one concept that feels both creatively strong and realistically producible.

Once an idea is selected, the intern and I will work together to build out the full preproduction pipeline: story outlines, visual sketches, beatboards, multiple storyboard drafts, a rough animatic, and eventually a polished final animatic. This final animatic will serve as the blueprint for a future class that I hope to lead using OURCA's CURE grant. In this theoretical class, a new cohort of students will bring the project to completion through animation production and post-production.

In addition to story development, the intern will take the lead in establishing a unified visual direction for the film. This includes crafting a style guide that outlines the dos and don'ts of the visual language, ensuring consistency in tone, character design, color palette, and animation style.

This project offers the intern hands-on experience in creative development, collaborative leadership, and animation preproduction, all within a structured, mentored environment.

What the student will DO and LEARN

In this internship, the student will take part in the full preproduction process for developing a short animated film (2–5 minutes). They will work closely with the instructor to help shape story ideas, join group pitch sessions, and assess which concept is best suited for production. Once an idea is chosen, the intern will help develop key story materials, including outlines, beatboards, and storyboards. Through this multistage process they will learn how to break a story into visual beats, frame individual shots for clarity and tone, and sequence images to guide pacing, action, and mood. They will also practice editing and revising boards in response to feedback, building skills in iteration and visual problem solving.

The intern will also assist in creating a rough and final animatic, learning how to time boards to audio, adjust rhythm and shot length, and prepare a sequence that can serve as a foundation for full production. A significant part of their role will involve shaping the visual identity of the film. They will help design characters and environments, select a working color palette, and build a style guide that includes visual references and clear dos and don'ts to keep the look consistent.

Additional benefits

This project provides a chance to take on a key creative role within a mentored environment, as well as early exposure to production culture and language. It is an opportunity to contribute meaningfully to a project that will eventually move into full production. The student will build a deeper understanding of how animation projects are developed in stages, learning not just what to do, but when and why certain choices are made. They will have the chance to practice creative leadership in a low-stakes setting, ask questions throughout the process, and begin to see themselves as someone who can shape visual stories.

from the ground up.

This experience will also give the student concrete work to include in a creative portfolio, such as storyboards, animatic sequences, design explorations, and the visual style guide. These materials will reflect not only their artistic ability but also their capacity to work through a process, respond to feedback, and make creative decisions with a larger production in mind.

Additional qualifications

The intern should, ideally, have some prior storyboarding or visual development experience. Any student within the animation emphasis of the Visual Communication program will have this, and it is likely that other students working in a time based visual medium will as well. Teaching a student the basics of storyboarding is not within the scope of this project.

Time commitment

5 hrs/week for 15 weeks