

1. What is MAG?

The Media Arts Grant, or MAG, is a funding system administered through the Department of Radio/Television/Film to support student-driven media-making experiences. These grants are given out to individuals in the department through a competitive process to support the creation of various types of media production in the department. This includes films, games, animations and other forms of new media.

2. What are the deadlines for MAG?

MAG production grants are awarded in Spring with a deadline in mid-May.

3. What are the criteria for receiving a MAG?

MAGs are awarded based on the clarity and originality of the project proposal, the rationale and feasibility of the project, the promise of completion (including scale/scope of production, budget, equipment, etc.), and the quality of previous work samples. These criteria cover MAG production grants, the Joann Torretta Award, and First Year Grants.

4. What is the selection process like?

Once applications are received, they are reviewed by multiple members of the MAG selection committee and given a score. The applications with the highest average score are awarded grants subject to budgetary allowances and departmental policy. The MAG committee will additionally evaluate each high-ranked application in terms of its specific mission or focus (i.e. if it's eligible for multicultural grants, the Torretta Award, etc.). If there are multiple projects with the same score, or if the scores are very close, a committee discussion may take place to choose the final recipients. The MAG committee may also choose from this list of highly ranked applications to award other available grants.

5. What is the relation of MAG to curricular filmmaking?

MAG winners are welcome to produce their projects within the context of an appropriate class (and with professor's approval), in which case they can shoot for two weekends any time during the quarter. If they are producing their projects independently or in collaboration with a student group, they can only shoot during the first five weeks of the quarter (again, maximum two weekends). Students accepted into the Directing for the Screen module are not eligible for MAGs, although they are eligible to apply for and receive the Joann Torretta Award for a curricular-based production.

6. What are student groups?

Student groups are University-sanctioned collectives that have organized around a common interest. Northwestern has hundreds of student groups, ranging from a cappella enthusiasts to activists, and has a process in place to facilitate easy group creation. These student groups can be associated with a department or work independently. Following are some relevant web links:

<https://northwestern.collegiatelink.net/organizations>

https://www.communication.northwestern.edu/learn/student_activities
<https://asg.northwestern.edu/for-groups/>

7. What are approved RTVF student groups?

The department has sanctioned several student groups. This includes Applause for a Cause, Blackout, Deep End, Niteskool, NSTV, NUWFA (NU Women's Filmmakers Alliance), Multicultural Filmmakers Collective, Studio 22, URSA (Undergraduate RTVF Student Association). By having departmental sponsorship, these groups are allowed to use cage equipment in the first five weeks of the quarter, and are asked to submit a budget to the departmental administration for their activities each year. These groups can also supplement MAG funds by partnering with recipients as executive producers on these projects.

8. What is their function/mandate?

Student groups function in a variety of ways and are one of the distinctive elements of our department. In addition to their work producing MAGs, these groups foreground issues associated with filmmaking leaders in important movements (female filmmakers, LGBTQIA filmmakers, minority filmmakers, social action filmmakers), organize workshops around common interests, produce relevant screenings, and bring esteemed visiting artists to campus. Some groups function as collectives (NSTV) thus creating work as a cohort. Each group is evaluated annually to make sure its processes are fair, it contributes to RTVF's positive culture, and does not replicate other groups

9. What is the relationship between student groups and MAG?

MAG applicants and recipients are encouraged to partner with relevant student groups to produce their projects. Student groups have an infrastructure to help MAG grantees get their work produced efficiently. Also, certain student groups have a mandate/agenda (see above) and can help MAG recipients bring out these elements in their work and/or can support filmmakers who fall within their mandate (i.e. female filmmakers or script with strong female characters). These groups may also choose to supplement the budget of the student they partner with (by no more than \$500), although they are not required to do so.

10. How do I partner with student groups to apply for and/or create a MAG project?

Student groups may solicit calls to partner with MAG applicants. We provide contact information to student groups of the awardees, and group contacts to awardees.

11. Do I have to partner with a student groups to receive a MAG?

You're not required to partner with a student group, but the department does encourage this sort of collaboration, as it is similar to the model that is used in the contemporary production world, where several groups partner resources for funding and talent to produce work. But it's up to you. MAG recipients may choose to produce their own project or (with the professor's approval) produce it in the context of a class. By partnering with a student group, your project will most likely receive \$500 in supplemental funding.

12. Why would I partner with one student group over another? Is it my choice or the student group's choice?

You and the student group both have to agree on a partnership. Neither you nor the student group are required to enter into any specific partnerships. Why does a filmmaker choose to partner with a particular producer or production company? Is there good chemistry at a personal level? Does the kind of work the production company (i.e. student group) creates match the filmmaker's vision? What is the "value added" of making such a partner? How hard will the production company work for you? And again, is there a shared vision? Think about the real world. How might you try out such partnerships? These are the same questions a student might ask about what agent to sign with or what director to have direct a script.

13. I heard there used to be a different system of co-curricular media making. Can you explain what's changed and why?

The MAG process was introduced in response to student requests for more faculty mentoring, a more equitable process, and a greater diversity of possibilities both in types of projects and differing visions within the RTVF community.

Previously: The student groups gave out grants to student filmmakers via a "pitch packet" process. Faculty or anyone outside the student group did not have a vote in what projects were selected. After selection, faculty often did not have input into those projects. Under MAG: Student groups can still use that "pitch packet" process to determine with which students/projects it wants to partner. However, the student groups must pass those proposed selections through the rotating MAG committee made up of faculty and students. MAG recipients are required to have three consultations with faculty member(s) during the production of the proposed project guaranteeing faculty input (note sometimes those consultations occur in the context of a class, if the MAG project is produced in a classroom context).

Note: In 2016-17, per arrangement with the department chair, Student 22 is giving out two "Bindley grants" based on donations.

14. I've heard that theatre students also work on co-curricular projects. Has that department's funding/mentorship system changed?

Yes. New procedures have been implemented school-wide based on recommendations from the Dean's Advisory Council.

15. I've heard the old system was much more complex with "pitches," "interviews," etc. Has that gone away and, if so, why?

See #12 above. Student groups have a rich history of traditions and processes that help them to decide with whom to partner, and the department expects that these groups will continue to use some of these approaches in their interactions with potential partners.

Note: "Pitching" is now being woven into all that we do as a department — we offer classes specifically on this skill, and it's addressed in virtually all others as well. Professors with measurable experience alongside industry visitors are helping to teach what is the best kind of pitching, as well as ways of presenting yourself and your project.

16. How do you know if this new MAG process is working?

Each year, the MAG process will be evaluated to make sure it's functioning in the most efficient, pedagogically sound way possible. The head of production, the departmental chair, and student group faculty advisors all continue to monitor the new system — via student feedback, the quality of the projects, the number of projects, and the application procedure.

17. Has funding for student projects in the department gone up or down over the years?

Funding for student production has gone up dramatically over the last decade. There is currently more funding underwriting co-curricular and curricular projects than at any time in RTVF history. Student groups are still well funded for their various activities. What has changed is, because of technological advances (film vs digital video), individual project funding may have gone down somewhat — it simply doesn't cost as much as it once did to make a quality production. Also, rather than student groups granting money directly, the grants are given out by the MAG committee. Additionally, some projects that are awarded by the MAG committee are submitted by a student group in partnership with individual filmmakers.

18. I've heard that student groups have funds to supplement my MAG budget. How does that work? Do they have to supplement my budget to be my producer?

At the discretion of the student group, it may offer to supplement a MAG applicant or recipient's budget. The group doesn't have to supplement the budget, but they may offer to do so up to \$500.

19. Can I add to my MAG budget?

Yes, you can supplement your MAG budget with your own funds, or through fundraising, though the MAG committee does not recommend it. Working within a budget is part of the learning, and spending more does not necessarily mean your project will be better, just that the expectations are raised.

20. What is a SOFO account? Do I need one to produce a MAG project?

SOFO <http://www.northwestern.edu/norris/services/sofo/> Is the student bank on campus. Each student group and the Directing for the Screen module is already set up with a SOFO.

21. Do MAG projects have cage access? How/when? Or do I need to partner with a student group to have cage access?

MAG projects do have cage access for the first five weeks of the quarter, with projects having a maximum of two weekends of shooting allocated. This is the case whether you partner with a student group or not. MAG projects shot within the context of a class can shoot all weeks of the quarter, again with a maximum of two weekends of shooting.

22. Why don't I know who's on the MAG committee?

The committee is composed of faculty and students that have taken an active interest in undergraduate student work. The committee is not made public to keep the process fair and to prevent lobbying of committee members. The committee members change annually. This process is similar to how many professional grants panels are conducted.

23. How many times can I receive a MAG grant? Per year and overall?

You are only eligible to receive one MAG production grant within a one-academic period.

24. Do I have to produce my MAG production in a particular quarter?

In most cases, yes. Fall awardees will shoot in winter quarter, and spring awardees will shoot in fall quarter, though some flexibility is possible depending on equipment and crew availability.

25. How do I find crew for my MAG production?

Students are encouraged (but not required) to partner with an extra-curricular student group to function as executive producers of your project. Not only will this sort of partnership give your project supplemental funding toward your production, but these groups will be able to organize your crew needs. Outside of such a collaboration, students have had success with general crew petitions, word of mouth, and postings to the student listserv.

26. I'm interested in the Directing for the Screen module. Can I also apply for a MAG if I'm accepted into the module?

No. If you have been accepted to the module, you are NOT eligible for MAG production awards since the module comes with its own substantial funding. You are additionally eligible to apply for the Joann Torretta Award for curricular production, and you are still welcome to partner with a student group and receive the supplemental \$500.

27. What is the Joann Torretta Award? How do I apply for that?

The Joann Torretta Award is a production award for projects produced within the context of a class. There is a box on the MAG application that asks if you want to be considered for this award. By checking this box, you are agreeing to produce your project within the context of a class, and to credit Joann Torretta in the credits of the film. Students accepted to the Directing for the Screen module are automatically considered for this award.

28. I've heard the process is run like the Guggenheim granting process or similar fellowship opportunities. Why is that a good model, and how is that relevant to me as a developing media-maker?

As you embark on your careers, you may find yourself competing for grants and awards with countless other applicants, with no access to or knowledge of who is choosing the winners. Often these grants are awarded based on short proposals and the strength of previous work. The MAG process is structured to emulate this and prepare you to write about your work in a precise,

economical, and nuanced way that can make you more competitive on the international competition circuit.

29. Are radio plays acceptable types of MAG projects? Installations? Interactive projects? What is and isn't possible in terms of MAG?

As the RTVF department continues to diversify in its offerings, and the media landscape continues to witness new forms and technologies emerging, what can be considered for a MAG grant also continues to evolve. All of the above and more could be considered for MAG grants, but keep in mind that these grants are production grants primarily. They aren't intended to pay rent, basic sustenance, or to be used for distribution funds. They are primarily meant for hard production costs to continue to raise the overall quality of new student work.

Note to students: as is the case with any student group or co-curricular activity, priority must be given to in-class work. Should you find yourself juggling a class assignment and a co-curricular project, academics should always take precedence.