

Graduate Handbook Master in Latin American Studies UF (MALAS)

The UF Center for Latin American Studies is among the oldest and highest-ranked centers in the world. The renowned richness of the Center's academic programs is sustained through dialogue among faculty and students with diverse perspectives, backgrounds and identities. Students pursuing Master in Latin American Studies (MALAS) collaborate with 200 core and affiliate faculty members from the humanities, social and natural sciences, and professional schools to develop individual programs of study that integrate courses selected from across the university. MALAS graduates are employed in educational and research institutions, international organizations, government agencies, and private businesses across the Americas; many continue studies in Ph.D. programs.

This handbook is designed to:

- Encourage students to advance through MALAS studies with confidence and success by knowing the expectations and benchmarks of their degree program.
- Support faculty to enjoy positive experiences advising MALAS students by clearly defining responsibilities of advisors and expectations for students, and by eliminating the need to re-invent the wheel with each thesis, internship, and capstone project.
- Promote consensus and constructive collaboration between students and committee members, and among committee members from diverse academic programs across the university.
- Assure consistency of expectations and procedures from the introductory course on *Research Methods and Design* through successful defense of culminating projects and graduation.

Specialization Coordinators, Initial Advisors, and *Research Methods and Design* class support vital explorations in the initial months of the MALAS program. Before and during their first semester, students communicate with various faculty members to discuss shared interests, and to learn about courses and opportunities. These conversations lead to identification of advisors and committee members; exploration of topics for graduate projects; and selection among thesis, internship, and capstone options, described in this handbook.

Initial Advisors, assigned to students upon admission to the MALAS program, may:

- help incoming students to identify courses and arrange a schedule for the first semester;
- explain specializations, and direct incoming students to relevant specialization coordinators;
- facilitate communication with potential advisor/supervisor and committee members;
- direct students toward potential projects for thesis, internship or capstone.

Students may ask their initial advisors to serve on their master's committees, however there is no expectation that initial advisors remain involved after semester one.

Other graduate programs hosted by UF Center for Latin American Studies, described in following links:

- [Master in Sustainable Development Practice \(MDP\)](#)
- Graduate Certificate in [Latin American Studies](#)
- Graduate Certificate in [Sustainable Development Practice \(SDP\)](#)
- Graduate Certificate in [Tropical Conservation and Development \(TCD\)](#)

Sections of this Handbook:

1. MALAS Academic Program
2. Thesis Guidelines
3. Internship Guidelines
4. Capstone Project Guidelines
5. Final Oral Exam (presentation and defense of graduate project)
6. University of Florida Resources and Policies
7. Student Funding

1. MALAS Academic Program

1.1 Curriculum for Master's Degree

Requirements for Master in Latin American Studies at UF

Earn 30 credit hours, fulfilling distribution requirements listed below

Demonstrate advanced proficiency in Portuguese, Spanish, or intermediate proficiency in Haitian Creole

Complete an interdisciplinary specialization of 12 credit hours

Produce and successfully defend a thesis, internship, or capstone project

Course Distribution Requirements

6 hours of gateway seminars

- LAS 6293 Research Design and Methods in Latin American Studies
- LAS 6220 Issues and Perspectives in Latin American Studies

At least 15 of the 30 credits earned must be in courses listed as LAS

Thesis students register for 3 credits of LAS 6971 in the semester of graduation (2 credits if summer graduation)

Internship and Capstone students register for 3 credits of LAS 6949 in any semester

MALAS Specializations

Specializations in Latin American Studies help graduate students and advisors to navigate the vast and constantly shifting curricular landscape supporting Latin American Studies at UF and foster connection and collaboration around shared interests among current and prospective UF faculty and students. Each MALAS student works with a specialization coordinator to fulfill requirements for one of 12 interdisciplinary specializations. To see curricular requirements, associated courses, and engaged faculty, click on each specialization at this [link](#).

Andean Studies

Arts, Literature and Culture

Brazilian Studies

Caribbean Studies

Crime, Law, and Governance in the Americas

Development Studies and Economic Analysis

Gender, Sexuality and Racialization

Indigenous Studies

International Communications

Latin American Business Environment

Latinx Studies, Migration & Transnational Studies

Tropical Conservation and Development

Language Requirements

Students must demonstrate advanced reading, writing and speaking proficiency in Spanish or Portuguese, or intermediate proficiency in Haitian Creole, either through coursework or an oral proficiency exam. Study of a second Latin American language is encouraged.

Thesis, Internship, or Capstone Project

Procedures and expectations for each type of culminating graduate project are described in detail in sections below.

1.2 Combined Degrees and Graduate Certificates

In a combined degree program, a BA or a BS plus an MA degree can be completed in five years.

A joint MALAS/JD degree is offered in collaboration with the UF Levin College of Law.

Simultaneously with MALAS, students may pursue one of 120 graduate certificates offered at UF in topics such as Tropical Conservation and Development, Global Health, Digital Humanities, Public Affairs, Gender and Development, and Sustainable Development Practice.

1.3 Graduation and Degree Application

During the semester in which graduation is expected, a student pursuing the thesis option **MUST** enroll in LAS 6971 (even if that student has already earned credits in LAS 6971 in an earlier semester). If graduation is spring or fall, 3 credits of LAS 6971 are required; for summer graduations, 2 credits are required.

All degree candidates must complete online degree applications via ONE.UF early in the term in which they expect to graduate (regardless of applications in previous terms). Deadlines are usually in September for fall graduation, January for spring graduation, and April for summer graduation. All degree requirements must be completed before the date of certification. Go to <https://student.ufl.edu/>, select My Record, then Certificate/Degree Application from the left menu.

1.4 Academic Standing

Satisfactory scholarship is defined as maintaining a B average (3.00). Students with less than a 3.00 GPA may not hold an assistantship or fellowship. In order to graduate with a MALAS degree, students need an overall GPA of 3.00 truncated (i.e. not rounded up; a 2.99 GPA will not be rounded up to a 3.00) and a 3.00 truncated in their major. If progress toward completing the program is unsatisfactory to the academic unit, college, or Dean of the Graduate School, a graduate student may be denied further registration.

2. Thesis Option Guidelines

2.1 Standard THESIS Timeline (individual paths may vary)

The foundations of each thesis project are established through the constitution of a thesis committee with at least three members, including a thesis advisor who serves as chair of that committee, and who must hold LAS Graduate Faculty Status. Roles and responsibilities for each member are described in section 2.7.

Semester 1	Enroll in LAS 6293 Design and Methods of Research
	Meet with several faculty members to explore shared interests, learn about upcoming courses, and consider who might become a member of thesis committee
	Explore topics, approaches and methods, begin draft of research proposal
	Mid semester check-in, thesis and internship workshop

Semester 2	Enroll in LAS 6220 Issues and Perspectives in Latin American Studies
Month 1	Thesis advisor /committee chair appointed by first month of semester
By midterm	Committee members selected (minimum: 1 chair + 2 members)
	Participate in Field Research Workshop
By midterm	Submit proposals to competition for field research funding
By midterm	Obtain IRB approval, apply for visa , if relevant
	Develop a research proposal , gain approval and signature from advisor; file signed document with Wanda Carter
Summer between 2 & 3	Carry out research related to thesis, either in field or library
Semester 3	Students may enroll in LAS 6971 Master's Research 1-3 credits with advisor for the purpose of working on aspects of the thesis, <u>but this is not required</u>
Month 1	Committee meeting to discuss thesis plan , sign approval form. After approval, file document and form with Wanda Carter
Semester 4	Students who plan to graduate this semester MUST enroll in LAS 6971
Before midterm	Submit complete draft of thesis to advisor; with advisor approval, set defense date with committee
Before midterm	Send thesis to committee at least 10 days before defense
By midterm	Thesis defense with committee in time to submit form signed by all committee members to Ms. Carter AND to revise thesis in time to submit before "Master's Thesis First Submission" <u>deadline for graduation</u>
Date usually around midterm	Submit thesis to UF Graduate School, following <u>Master's Thesis Submission Checklist</u>

2.2 Research Proposal

The research proposal is a living document that develops throughout the first year of studies, adapting to changing ideas, circumstances and opportunities. During semester 1, MALAS students design preliminary research proposals in a required methodology course (LAS 6293). During semester 2, students work with their advisors to develop research proposals and gain advisors' signatures. In many cases, this proposal is adapted for field research grant competitions and for IRB approval.

Form and length vary; research proposals are generally 2000–4000 words long and include the following:

- title
- identification of phenomenon or issue to be studied
- research question(s): what does the project seek to discover or understand?
- purpose: what will findings contribute (to science, to society, to a specific debate)?
- interdisciplinary character of the project and relevance to the field of Latin American Studies
- research methods and instruments to be used (e.g., surveys, archival research, ethnoecology tools, literary analysis, focus groups, ethnographic observation, data or discourse analysis, mapping)
- justification of instruments selected and methodological approach: how do these support topic, questions, context?
- Statement of own positionality as researcher and intellectual
- introduction and definition of key concepts
- theories or approaches to be applied in analyzing findings and answering research questions
- areas of literature to be studied

- spatiotemporal parameters of thesis (demarcate historical period, geographic location, population of study)
- spatiotemporal frame of research activities (where and when research is carried out)
- organization(s) or institution(s) with which student will collaborate, if appropriate
- tentative table of contents: sections, charts/maps/photos
- strategy for disseminating research findings to appropriate audiences

2.3 Thesis Plan & Meeting

The thesis plan, developed after most research has been carried out, updates all content listed above for a research proposal, with the addition of an outline for written thesis and a plan for writing with deadlines. A thesis plan should provide tentative titles for planned chapters and identify issues and questions to be addressed in each, report methods used to date, describe materials and findings obtained, and specify the contribution the thesis is intended to make. Thesis plans are generally 4000 to 6000 words long.

Thesis students should contact librarians in the Latin American and Caribbean Collection for assistance in locating sources and generating bibliographies. All LAS theses use evidence-based writing and must cite, summarize and comment on literature consulted.

Usually during the first month of semester 3, each student presents a thesis plan to all committee members and arranges a meeting to discuss the plan. Committee members represent various departments, each with its own expectations and procedures, and students are responsible for making sure that each committee member receives a copy of the present MALAS thesis guidelines, and for bringing copies of the Thesis Plan Approval Form to the meeting.

This meeting provides a forum for student, chair and other committee members to reflect together on research findings, to assess strategies for developing the written thesis, and to establish consensus on plans for ongoing research and writing. Student and committee members look together at the thesis outline or proposed table of contents and discuss various options for organizing ideas and materials. After committee members meet, make suggestions, and sign the approval form, a copy of the plan and signed form are stored in the student's file.

2.4 Written Thesis

A MALAS thesis demonstrates the ability to conceive a research question, identify and utilize literature from various sources, carry out primary research, analyze data or materials, and make a persuasive argument in clear prose. The thesis should make an original contribution to the field of Latin American Studies.

Elements usually included in a master's thesis (not necessarily organized in this order)

Title

Abstract (approximately 200 words, no references cited)

Acknowledgements (optional)

Table of contents

Introduction

- Topic
- Research question(s)
- Context of study: geographic, political, socio-economic, etc.
- Very brief summary of main findings
- Roadmap guiding readers through the thesis

Framework of study

- Research design
- Approach or theories that guide work
- Key concepts developed and applied in the thesis
- Methodological instruments developed and applied to gather material
- Justification of instruments selected and methodological approach
- Analytic approaches to analyzing and interpreting findings

Body (elements may be organized in numerous ways)

- Reflection on literature pertinent to the topic, approach and context
- Presentation of research findings
- Discussion or interpretation of findings

Conclusion

- Summary of answer to research question(s)
- Contribution of the study to science and/or to society

Bibliography

Technical requirements

Most MALAS theses have ranged between 16,000 and 36,000 words (70 to 150 pages double-spaced, including bibliography and appendices). However, there is no established minimum or maximum length.

Each thesis should carefully follow one of three major writing and citation styles. Work in social studies most commonly uses Chicago Manual of Style (CMS); work in humanities tends to use the Modern Language Association (MLA); and behavioral sciences might choose the American Psychological Association (APA) style guide. [Purdue Owl](#) provides excellent quick guides to all three styles. UF libraries offers access from your computer to [The Chicago Manual of Style Online](#).

UF has its own set of [technical regulations](#) for master's and doctoral theses (procedures, formatting, style guides) and it is more efficient to start a thesis with the UF template than to adjust it at the end. Throughout the year, UF offers workshops on Electronic Thesis & Dissertation Submissions.

2.5 General Criteria for Assessing Thesis (will vary by thesis, topic, committee members)

Composition of paper

- Purpose of study and research questions are stated in the beginning of the thesis and addressed at the end.
- Subject is clearly demarcated and the data collected are thoroughly described.
- Contents are organized according to logical structure evident in the table of contents and subheadings.
- Demonstrates that research questions are significant and that findings contribute to a stated purpose.
- Identifies, cites, and shows connections with relevant scholarly literature.

Methodology

- Research is carried out with sound and well-designed methods.
- A variety of instruments are applied; if relevant to the approach, both qualitative and quantitative.
- Instruments used, and processes of applying each, are explicitly described.
- Pros and cons of selected methods and instruments are discussed.
- If appropriate, specific research instruments and findings are included in appendices.

Theoretical perspective

- There is a clear expression of the author's own positionality in terms of identity and theory.
- Work goes beyond description to apply explicitly identified concepts and theories, and to develop original analysis or interpretation.
- Approaches or ideas developed in different academic disciplines are applied and combined in new ways to address issues relevant to interdisciplinary Latin American Studies.
- Theses may draw on material, methods, and theories from the humanities, social sciences and/or natural sciences, and from professional schools such as health, communications, agronomy and law.

Reference to relevant research and literature

- Literature presented and applied in the thesis includes selections from readings in MALAS coursework.
- Publications on the topic of study, on the selected theoretical and methodological approach(es), and on the geographic region(s) are identified and discussed.
- Thesis brings together literature from multiple disciplines, by authors representing diverse (ethnoracial, gender, national, theoretical) positions, and includes foreign language publications and other sources outside of US-based academic literature.

Research results

- The thesis presents original results generated with appropriate methods.
- Sufficient and reliable material is gathered via field research and/or the study of documents, data-bases, web material, or other sources.
- The thesis complements and contextualizes primary material with secondary data (e.g., demographic or geographical information; economic statistics; climate records; information from scholarly, scientific and government sources).

Critical thinking

- The phenomenon of study is illuminated from more than one perspective.
- The author subjects concepts, theories, approaches to critical scrutiny and gives attention to the socio-historical context and origins of each.

Style and presentation

- A clear distinction is made between review of prior literature, presentation of new findings, and author's analysis or interpretation.
- Punctuation in text references and bibliography follows chosen style guidelines.
- Tables and figures are clearly labeled and interpreted in the text.

2.6 Present and Defend the Thesis

With advisor's approval, the student will schedule a public presentation and defense, and send the written thesis to all committee members at least ten days in advance. As detailed in section 5, each thesis student will make a public presentation followed by a defense of the paper with the student's thesis committee. This presentation and discussion constitute a final exam for the MA degree in Latin American Studies.

2.7 Responsibilities of the Thesis Committee

Thesis Advisor / Thesis Committee Chair

The faculty member who serves as advisor and chair of a thesis committee must hold LAS Graduate Faculty Status. The advisor is responsible for accompanying the student through three main milestones: research proposal 2nd semester, thesis plan 3rd semester, and thesis defense and submission 4th semester. At each stage,

the advisor will read a paper prepared by advisee, discuss it in a meeting, and sign a form documenting approval. The advisor serves as chair to the full thesis committee, which convenes at meetings for the thesis plan and the thesis defense.

Thesis Committee Members

Each thesis committee must have at least three members, including the student’s advisor. Additional members may come from within and beyond UF. Committee members support the development and implementation of the research and written thesis in various ways. All members read and comment on the plan for the thesis, and on the final paper. All members participate in at least two formal meetings: to discuss the plan for the thesis (usually early semester 3), and to participate in an oral defense.

3. Internship Option Guidelines

Internships related to Latin America, the Caribbean, and Latinx in the US offer unique opportunities for applied and practical learning. The Center supports experience working with an array of organizations in ways that inform and deepen classroom study, and vice versa, and open up career possibilities.

Written agreements assure that students, host agencies, faculty supervisor and graduate advisor agree on explicit expectations and procedures. Before embarking on a project, a student must obtain approval of a Plan of Internship with a signature from the graduate advisor, the UF Faculty Instructor of Record, and the organization or institution with which the student will collaborate (hereafter referred to as the “host agency”). Then, these participants collaboratively develop an Internship Agreement that demonstrates the project’s relation to Latin American, Caribbean, or Latinx Studies; describes the bulk of the work as substantive and non-clerical; and indicates whether the work is paid or unpaid. A representative of the agency providing the opportunity assumes responsibility to oversee the internship and submits a written evaluation to the instructor of record.

3.1 Standard INTERNSHIP Timeline (individual paths may vary)

Semester 1	Enroll in LAS 6293 Design and Methods of Research
	Meet with several faculty members to explore shared interests, learn about upcoming courses, and consider who might become a member of internship committee
	Explore topics, approaches and methods for internship, draft a proposal for internship project and report including conceptual framework and methods
Midterm	Mid semester check-in, thesis and internship workshop
Semester 2	Enroll in LAS 6220 Issues and Perspectives in Latin American Studies
Month 1	Supervisory Faculty Member appointed by January
By midterm	Committee selected (minimum: 1 supervisor + 1 member)
	Participate in Field Research Workshop
	If relevant, submit proposals for funding
By midterm	Develop a Plan of Internship and Internship Agreement . Gain approval and signature from the host agency, supervising faculty, and graduate advisor; file documents with Wanda Carter
Summer between 2 & 3 or semester 2 or 3	Register for 3-6 credits of LAS 6949 during the semester in which the internship is carried out, or during the following semester

Summer between 2 & 3, or semester 2 or 3	Carry out internship (timing will vary)
Semester 3 Month 1	Committee meeting to discuss plan for internship paper , sign approval form; after approval, file document and form with W. Carter
Semester 4 Month 2 or 3	Option to enroll in LAS 6905 “Individual Work” for students needing extra time to finish internship paper
Month 3	Gain supervisor’s approval of draft, then schedule defense
Month 3	Send paper to committee at least 10 days before defense
Defense is completed at least one month before end of term	Internship paper defense with committee in time to submit revised copy and complete paperwork in GIMS system before final submission date for graduation

3.2 Responsibilities of the Student

Find an internship

Students may explore internship options on their own or pursue possibilities via connections maintained by the Center for Latin American Studies through local, state, national and international networks and alumni linkages. Students should send cover letters and CVs to potential partners and arrange for interviews with host agencies. The faculty supervisor and graduate coordinator may assist in the process and must approve arrangements before they are implemented. Information about internship possibilities can be found at UF [Center for Latin American Studies](#), [UF Career Resource Center](#), [UT-Austin Enlace Career Center](#), and other sources.

Establish a committee

Each student will form a supervisory committee consisting of one supervising faculty member (hereafter referred to as “supervisor”) and one or more additional faculty members. At least one committee member must hold graduate faculty status in Latin American Studies. In most cases, the supervisor will serve as instructor of record for internship credits.

Gain approval on internship plan and internship agreement

A student works with supervisor and host agency to develop a written plan for internship, and to draft a formal internship agreement. Using forms linked here, the student obtains signature of Host Agency Supervisor, UF Faculty Instructor of Record, and Graduate Coordinator, then submits signed copy to Wanda Carter.

Earn credits

Students should sign up for 3-6 credits of LAS 6949 during the semester in which the internship is carried out, or in the following semester. A UF faculty member is registered as instructor of record and will grade the internship on a S/U basis. Each credit hour of an internship study represents 45 hours of work with a host agency. This work may be carried out intensely during a summer break or spread over a semester. MALAS students should complete tasks and activities outlined in the Internship Agreement, performing their duties in a professional manner.

Record experiences in journal and prepare two reports

- Keep a daily or weekly journal, including a log of activities, together with comments and questions.
- Midway through the internship period, prepare and submit a 3-5 page progress report.

- At the end of the internship, submit a longer report to the UF instructor of record.

Develop an internship paper plan (usually third semester)

Make a tentative outline for your paper, and sketch ideas about possible contents in each section. Plan strategically to incorporate, and to build on, journal entries, internship reports, and other materials produced during internship. Internship paper plans are generally 1500-3000 words long. The following outline may be adapted to each unique internship project.

Introduction

- Character and purpose of internship
- When, where, with whom internship was carried out
- What was learned? Why is the experience important?
- Outline to guide reader through the rest of internship paper

Background on Topic(s) and Context(s) Drawn from Literature

- Key ideas and debates in the literature about the **topic** of your internship (e.g. immigrant needs, environmental protection, women’s rights, literacy campaign, business policy, Latinx fraternities).
- Information in the literature about the **context** of your internship (e.g. rural Guatemala, Chicago immigrant neighborhood, post-conflict Colombia, youth scene in Lima). Some of the following may be relevant:
 - Country/region/city where you worked
 - Socio-economic characteristics and issues
 - Demographic profile
 - Socioeconomic data
 - Geographical characteristics of location
 - Historical considerations
 - Political and cultural conditions and traditions
 - Considerations relating to class, gender, sexuality, or ethnoracial identities and relations
 - Environmental concerns and issues
 - Primary sources of employment and production
 - Market linkages or lack thereof
 - Aspects of policy and regulatory framework, including tenure

The Internship

- Describe the host agency.
 - Mission
 - Organization
 - Employees and volunteers
 - Stakeholders
 - Practical activities, objectives and operations
 - Background history
 - Position or politics of the organization
- Describe the student’s internship goals and assignment, including anticipated products.
- Describe practices and methods used while carrying out the internship.
- Justify methodological approach and activities chosen.
- Testimony of notable experiences.
- Identify key challenges and accomplishments.

Interdisciplinary Analysis

Connect ideas and context information from the literature with information gathered and experiences gained during the internship:

- What did you learn about the **topic** of the internship?
- What did you learn about the **context** of the internship?
- What did you learn about the approach of and challenges faced by **the agency or program**?
- Challenges faced in student's individual efforts
- Questions raised by experiences, by the literature, and by relations between them
- Connections with issues and approaches in Latin American Studies

Conclusion

- Sum up what was learned
- How student was changed by the experience
- Impact of internship on host agency
- Contributions to scholarship and/or society
- Strategy for disseminating results or findings to appropriate audiences

Bibliography

- List all literature on topic and context that you have cited or quoted.
- List grey literature that you have cited or quoted (paper or web-based materials produced by host agency or other organizations, not formally published).
 - Mission statements
 - Planning or evaluation documents
 - Research reports
 - Educational materials

Present internship paper plan to committee

After gaining approval of supervisor, each student should give a draft of the internship paper plan to all members of the committee and arrange a meeting to discuss the plan. Committee members represent various departments, each with its own expectations and procedures, and students are responsible for making sure that each committee member receives a copy of MALAS internship guidelines.

The meeting to plan the internship paper, usually held early in semester 3, provides a forum for student, supervisor and other committee member(s) to reflect together on plans for writing the internship paper. After committee members meet, make suggestions, and approve the plan, a signed copy is stored in the student's file.

Write a final internship paper

Design and styles may vary, yet each paper should cover the points identified above under *internship paper plan*. Final papers may range from 6,000-10,000 words. This paper should follow writing standards described in Chicago Manual of Style (CMS). Pay special attention to CMS citation style and bibliography. UF Libraries offers access from your computer to [The Chicago Manual of Style Online](#), and [Purdue Owl](#) provides an excellent abbreviated guide.

Present and defend the internship paper

With supervisor's approval, the student will schedule a public presentation and defense, and send the internship paper to all committee members at least a week in advance. As detailed in section 5, each internship student will make a public presentation followed by a defense of the paper with the student's supervisory committee. This presentation and discussion constitute a final exam for the MA degree in Latin American Studies.

3.3 Responsibilities of the Supervisor and the Supervisory Committee

Supervisor

- May assist the student with identifying and securing an internship opportunity.
- May consult with the host agency supervisor regarding expected duties.
- Approves a Plan of Internship before implementation begins.
- Maintains regular contact with the student and the host agency supervisor throughout the internship.
- Requires submission of journal entries and a mid-term progress report and responds to these documents while student is still carrying out internship.
- Requires submission of an internship report soon after internship activities are finished.
- Submits a grade of S or U, based on the report of the host agency supervisor, and a review of the student's journal, mid-semester report, and final report.
- Presides over two formal meetings with student and committee: one to discuss the plan for the internship paper, and one final oral exam in which the project and paper are defended and assessed.

Supervisory committee

Consists of a supervisor and at least one other faculty member; one member of the committee must hold LAS graduate faculty status in LAS. Additional members may come from within and beyond UF. Committee members support the development and implementation of internship plan in various ways. All members read and comment on the plan for the internship paper, and on the final paper. All members meet two times: to discuss the PLAN for the internship paper (usually semester 3), and to participate in an oral defense.

3.4 Responsibilities of the Host Agency

A representative of the agency usually interviews the potential intern by telephone, skype or in person, and may also talk with faculty supervisor or graduate coordinator, who together approve the proposed internship. By accepting an intern, an agency commits to provide educational experiences within the agency's ongoing work, and also to allow and support the intern to work on a specific project or issue. The agency assigns responsibility for supervision of the intern to a specific individual who, at the end of the internship period, submits a written review assessing performance of the agreed duties. The host agency may provide wages, reimbursement for travel, or other remuneration while the student is on internship. These arrangements are agreed upon by agency and intern and written into the Internship Agreement.

4. Capstone Project Option Guidelines

Following outline for the MALAS Capstone process has been informed by documents from the UF School of Journalism, and will be adapted in conjunction with students who carry out MALAS Capstone projects in 2018 and 2019.

The capstone option provides students with the opportunity to apply knowledge and skills acquired through the program to a specific need or issue related to Latin America, the Caribbean, or Latinx. The Center supports a wide array of projects that inform and deepen classroom study, including but not limited to work with: community-based initiatives, architectural models, design-build projects, program evaluations or grant proposals for a non-profit/NGO, website construction, journalistic articles, exhibit catalogues, and creative works of art (e.g. exhibition, video, documentary, performance, creative writing). A capstone project allows a student to demonstrate the ability to plan and complete a significant professional and creative work, demonstrating both vision and competence to prospective employers.

In conjunction with design and realization of a capstone project, students are required to prepare three documents, and to discuss these with advisors and committee members, following guidelines provided below. Capstone students prepare a written proposal early in the process; a written plan partway through the process; and a final paper. These three documents represent evolving stages of a text that defines the project and context, describes the method and process in detail, reviews relevant literature, reflects independent research and analysis, and shows how the project makes an original contribution to knowledge and society.

4.1 Standard CAPSTONE Timeline (individual paths may vary)

Semester 1	Enroll in LAS 6293 Design and Methods of Research
	Meet with faculty members to explore shared interests, learn about upcoming courses, and consider who might become a member of capstone committee
	Explore topics, approaches and methods for capstone project, draft a proposal for project including conceptual framework and methods
	Mid semester check-in, thesis and internship workshop
Semester 2	Enroll in LAS 6220 Issues and Perspectives in Latin American Studies
Month 1	Supervisory Faculty Member appointed by month 1
By mid-term	Committee selected (minimum: 1 supervisor + 1 member) appointed by midterm
	Participate in Field Research Workshop
	If relevant, submit proposals for funding
	Develop a Capstone Proposal . Gain approval and signature from supervising faculty, graduate advisor and relevant partners; file documents with Wanda Carter
Summer between 2 & 3 or semester 2 or 3	Register for at least 3 credits of LAS 6949; additional credits may be earned up to total of 6.
Semester 2, 3 and/or summer between	Carry out capstone project (timing will vary)
Semester 3	Prepare Capstone Plan, gain advisor approval, submit to committee members ten days before meeting
Month 1	Committee meeting to discuss Capstone Plan , sign approval form; after approval, file document and form with W. Carter
Semester 4	Option to enroll in LAS 6905 “Individual Work” for students needing extra time to finish capstone project
Month 2 or 3	Gain supervisor’s approval of draft, then schedule defense
Month 3	Send paper to committee at least 10 days before defense
Defense is completed at least one month before end of term	Capstone project presentation and paper defense with committee in time to submit revised copy and complete paperwork in GIMS system before final submission date for graduation

4.2 Responsibilities of the Student

Forge a capstone project idea

Students may explore capstone options on their own or pursue possibilities via connections maintained by the Center for Latin American Studies through local, state, national and international networks and alumni linkages. Students should send cover letters and CVs to potential partners and sponsors and arrange skype or live meetings. Faculty supervisor and graduate coordinator may assist in the process and must formally approve of the project proposed.

Establish a committee

Each student will form a supervisory committee consisting of one supervising faculty member (hereafter referred to as “supervisor”) and one or more additional faculty members. At least one committee member must hold graduate faculty status in Latin American Studies. In most cases, the supervisor will serve as instructor of record for required 3 credits of LAS 6949 (additional credits up to 6 total are optional).

Develop a capstone proposal (usually second semester)

A proposal of around 1500-2500 words, developed early in the process, presents a preliminary vision, justification, and plan for a capstone project. The capstone plan and the final capstone paper will build on this proposal, enriching original sections and reporting on implementation and outcome of the project. The proposal should include a discussion of which target audience the student hopes to reach, and the impact articles could provide. Provide the background that shows the proposed project will be useful to and/or needed by the intended audience. For instance, a proposal to write a series of newspaper articles about problems faced by Puerto Rican hurricane refugees in Florida would include statistics about the numbers of such refugees in Florida, descriptions of the problems faced by refugees, challenges they create for local governments, identification of relevant legislation and agencies, etc.

Elements to Be Addressed in the Capstone Proposal

Short Introduction

- Character and purpose of capstone project
- Student’s capstone goals, including anticipated/finished products
- When, where, with whom the project will be/was carried out
- What will be/was learned? Why is the experience important?
- Outline to guide reader through the rest of the paper

Purpose and Need

Clearly identify the issue, problem, or opportunity addressed by the capstone project, and explain why the project will be valuable for a specific audience (profession, organization, social group, and/or industry). Describe and analyze the situation by gathering information from sources such as:

- Meetings with sponsors, clients, and other stakeholders who may be involved in the project
- Information from experts on the issue, publications, media, as well as other stakeholders
- Site visits conducted to obtain sense of the context and to talk with and/or observe environment and people involved in the issue, problem, or opportunity

Conceptual Framework and Questions

Introduce key ideas and show how these are defined and applied in the project. Identify theories, principles, movements that motivate and inform the approach of the project.

Review of Literature and Other Sources

Report and synthesize secondary research relevant to project. Comment on and critique what is known and not known about the project idea. Draw on literature to establish background on project and context (geographical, cultural, political, economic, etc.). Relevant trade and/or academic literature may include:

- Scholarly articles and books
- Trade and professional literature
- Projects similar to the one proposed
- Reviews of completed projects similar to the one proposed
- Historical archives
- Media articles and video clips
- Records of organizations and people involved
- Legislation, program descriptions and examples, administrative reports and memoranda, Web sites

Methodology

Map out primary research for the planning and execution of the project, and outline the steps involved in the design and presentation of the project itself. Describe details of the method(s) and justify why the method you choose is the most appropriate for planning and designing the project. Discuss advantages, disadvantages, and strategies to address limitations.

Address those relevant to research and design of project:

- Model and description of research
- Description of population engaged, and justification for type of sample and population chosen
- Development of instruments for gathering observations and information
- Data coding on entering and cleaning or editing
- Description of data analysis
- Findings expected, or found

Address those relevant to implementation of project:

- Activities
- Timeline—which activities will be performed and when completion is expected
- Budget—dollar figures for equipment, supplies, and technical assistance
- Funding—who is responsible for payment of expenses
- Description of the final form of the project, e.g., visual, audio, multimedia, built
- Legal issues such as copyright, use of trademarks, proprietary information from clients, sponsors
- Distribution of royalties

Presentation and Dissemination of Outcome

Plans for presentation to master's committee at UF. Plans for presentation or dissemination to the public, intended audience, partners, clients and/or sponsors. Make clear where the project outcome will be available and how to access it.

Bibliography

- List all literature on topic and context that you have cited or quoted.
- List grey literature that you have cited or quoted (paper or web-based materials produced by host agency or other organizations, not formally published).
 - Mission statements
 - Planning or evaluation documents
 - Research reports
 - Educational materials

Capstone Plan & Meeting

The capstone plan, developed after the project has been launched, updates all content listed above for a capstone proposal, with the addition of a schedule with dates for finishing and presenting project, and an outline of the written capstone paper. Capstone plans are generally 2000 to 5000 words long.

Usually during the first month of semester 3, each student presents a capstone plan to all committee members and arranges a meeting to discuss the plan. Committee members represent various departments, each with its own expectations and procedures, and students are responsible for making sure that each committee member receives a copy of the present MALAS capstone guidelines, and for bringing copies of the Capstone Plan Approval Form to the meeting.

This meeting provides a forum for student, chair and committee members to reflect together on project activities to date, to assess strategies for developing the written paper, and to establish consensus on plans for completion of project. Student and committee members look together at the paper outline or proposed table of contents and discuss various options for organizing ideas and materials. After committee members meet, make suggestions, and sign the approval form, a copy of the Capstone Plan and signed form are stored in the student's file.

Present capstone plan to supervisor, then to full committee

After gaining approval of supervisor, each student should give a draft of the capstone plan to all members of the committee one week before meeting and arrange a meeting to discuss the plan. Committee members represent various departments, each with its own expectations and procedures, and students are responsible for making sure that each committee member receives a copy of MALAS capstone guidelines.

The capstone plan meeting, usually held early in semester 3, provides a forum for student, supervisor and other committee member(s) to reflect together on plans strategies and to build consensus on plans for completing the project and the paper. After committee members meet, make suggestions, and approve the proposal, a signed copy is stored in the student's file.

Carry out capstone project, earn credits

Students should sign up for minimum of 3 credits of LAS 6949 during a semester in which work on capstone is underway. Additional credits may be earned in LAS 6949, up to 6 total. A UF faculty member is registered as instructor of record and will grade the capstone on a S/U basis.

Write capstone paper

Final papers range from 4,000-8,000 words long, including bibliography, and should follow writing standards described in *Chicago Manual of Style* (CMS). Pay special attention to CMS author-date citation style and bibliography style. UF Libraries offers access from your computer to [The Chicago Manual of Style Online](#), and [Purdue Owl](#) provides an excellent abbreviated guide.

Design and shape of the capstone paper may vary, yet each paper should cover all the elements identified above under *capstone proposal and capstone plan*, together with the following elements:

Interdisciplinary Analysis

Connect ideas and information from coursework and literature with information gathered and experiences gained during the project:

- What did you learn about the topic of the project?
- What did you learn about the context of the project?
- Challenges faced in student's efforts
- Questions raised by experiences, by the literature, and by relations between them
- Connections with issues and approaches in Latin American Studies

Conclusion

- Sum up: What was learned in the capstone project?
- How student was changed by the experience
- Impact of capstone project
- Contributions to scholarship and/or society
- Strategy for disseminating results or findings to appropriate audiences

Present and defend the capstone project and paper

With supervisor's approval, the student will schedule a public presentation and defense of the project outcome and the paper. Final paper should be sent to all committee members at least a week in advance. As detailed in section 5, each capstone student will make a public presentation followed by a defense of the paper with the student's supervisory committee. This presentation and discussion constitute a final exam for the MA degree in Latin American Studies.

4.3 Responsibilities of the Supervisor and the Supervisory Committee

Supervisor

- May assist the student with identifying and designing capstone project.
- May consult with the partners, sponsors or collaborators on the project.
- Approves a Capstone Proposal before implementation begins.
- Maintains regular contact with the student throughout the project.
- Serves as instructor of record for LAS 6949 and submits a grade of S or U for the work.
- Presides over two formal meetings with student and committee: one to discuss the plan for the capstone project, and one final oral exam in which the project and paper are defended and assessed.

Supervisory committee

Consists of a supervisor and at least one other faculty member; one member of the committee must hold LAS graduate faculty status in LAS. Additional members may come from within and beyond UF. Committee members support the development and implementation of capstone project plan in various ways. All members read and comment on the plan for the capstone project, and on the final paper. All members meet two times: to discuss the plan for the capstone paper (usually semester 3), and to participate in an oral defense of the project.

5. Final Oral Exam

All MALAS students complete a final oral exam. The defense of a thesis or an internship paper is described in detail here. The final oral exam of a capstone project will be similar to these defenses, and may also include presentation of the work itself, in the form of an exhibit, film, design or other product.

After gaining approval of committee chair or supervisor, each student finds a date and time convenient for all committee members, reserves a room, and distributes copies of the thesis or internship paper at least ten days before the defense date. Committee members usually represent various departments, each with its own expectations and procedures, and students are responsible for making sure that each committee member receives a copy of MALAS thesis and internship guidelines. The student is also responsible for obtaining necessary paperwork from the Center's Program Assistant and bringing it to the defense to be signed.

A master's defense usually lasts between 60 and 90 minutes. Students may prepare for the defense by clarifying their main message and practicing an opening presentation no longer than 10-15 minutes. The defense is a public event: colleagues, professors, and friends may be invited to attend, others may show up. Refreshments may be provided, but are not expected.

The committee's pre-defense meeting

Before commencing the defense, the chair or supervisor leads a discussion among committee members to ensure consensus with regard to procedures and parameters of assessment. Committee members may raise questions or concerns at this time. The student and audience members will be asked to leave the room during this pre-defense meeting.

Opening presentation

Most candidates begin the defense with a brief presentation that provides context and sets the tone for the defense. This should not exceed 10-15 minutes in length.

- Summarize the main questions and findings of thesis or internship paper.
- Highlight strengths of the work and its contributions.
- Put the work in perspective to relevant issues: a conceptual or methodological debate, public policy, historical event, or contemporary social challenge.
- Put the work into perspective with respect to oneself: how candidate got interested in topic, or plans to continue pursuing or engaging with aspects of it.

Using Power Point or other audio-visual material is acceptable but not necessary. Avoid putting too much text on a slide, and do not read the slides out loud. It is often useful to show a slide with the table of contents, and to show map(s) to locate work, as well as photographs of the site and subject matter.

The defense

Members of the committee will make observations, offer suggestions, and ask questions. The candidate should answer each question as directly and succinctly as possible. Usually one member of the committee will complete his/her questions, then pass the floor to another member. The Chair or Supervisor usually goes last. Sometimes deliberations are less structured.

The committee's post-defense meeting

After the presentation and discussion, the candidate and observers are asked to leave the room. The committee assesses candidate's performance and comes to an agreement about an assessment, and about revisions that may be required in the text. The post-defense meeting usually takes 10-30 minutes.

The committee agrees on one of three possible outcomes: "Pass," "Pass pending required revisions," and "Fail." The most common outcome, "Pass pending required revisions," may be handled in several ways:

- 1) The committee withholds signatures until each member has read and approved a revised version.
- 2) Committee members sign the forms and delegate responsibility to the Chair or Supervisor to ensure that stipulated improvements are made, then provide the final signature.
- 3) The committee and the chair or supervisor sign the forms and trust the candidate to make requested changes.

Signed documents must be submitted to the Center's Program Assistant Wanda Carter and UF Graduate School before the Final Submission Deadline for intended term of degree award. Do not assume that submitted document will be accepted; the Editorial Office may ask for further adjustments. Once the Editorial Office's requirements are met, the student receives an e-mail indicating final clearance. No changes can be made after a manuscript is accepted by the graduate school.

The defense in perspective

The defense is an educational opportunity to value and an occasion to enjoy. Most faculty members come to a thesis or internship defense having carefully reviewed the student paper and anticipating a lively, substantive, and rewarding conversation. Good discussions explore strengths and weaknesses of the project and paper, consider related issues, and probe the candidate's ability to think in new directions. Productive debates often lead beyond a candidate's competency, in which case wise students simply answer "I do not know" (rather than rambling on) and pose questions to the committee, taking advantage of the opportunity for collective feedback.

6. University of Florida Resources and Policies

- **Latin American and Caribbean Collection at UF Libraries:** Specialized staff support searches among the 500,000 volumes, 50,000 microforms, thousands of current and historical serial titles and digital resources in [this world-class collection](#).
- **Challenges in Academic Writing, Grammar and Style:** The [UF Writing Studio](#) is committed to helping University of Florida students and faculty meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. We support independent learning and scholarship by providing one-on-one consultations, workshops tailored to specific classes (graduate and undergraduate), and faculty retreats focusing on publishing original research. Students and faculty at all levels and in every discipline are welcome!

- **Technical difficulties for E-learning in CANVAS:** Contact the UF Help Desk at Learning-support@ufl.edu or (352) 392-HELP - select option 2.
- **Personal Challenges:** Students experiencing crisis or personal problems that interfere with general wellbeing are encouraged to utilize the university's counseling resources. The Counseling Center and Student Mental Health both provide confidential counseling services at no cost for enrolled students. Resources are also available for students seeking to clarify career and academic goals and deal with academic challenges.
 1. University Counseling Center, 301 Peabody Hall, (352) 392-1575; personal and career counseling.
 2. Student Mental Health, Student Health Care Center, (352) 392-1171, personal counseling.
 3. Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS), Student Health Care Center, (352) 392-1161.
 4. Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, (352) 392-1601, career development assistance and counseling.
- **Students with Disabilities Act:** The Dean of Students Office coordinates the needed accommodations of students with disabilities. This includes the registration of disabilities, academic accommodations within the classroom, accessing special adaptive computer equipment, providing interpretation services, and mediating faculty-student disability related issues. *Dean of Students Office*, 202 Peabody Hall, (352) 392-7066.
- **Software Use:** All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.
- **Academic Misconduct:** Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Work submitted for credit by UF students should not include any form of plagiarism, cheating, or unauthorized aid. Unless an assignment is explicitly identified as a group project, all work should be completed independently. Students should understand and follow the Student Honor Code that they signed upon enrollment at the University of Florida: *"I understand the University of Florida expects its students to be honest in all their academic work. I agree to adhere to this commitment to academic honesty and understand that my failure to comply with this commitment may result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from the University."*

Student Grievance Procedures. The University of Florida is committed to treating all members of the University community fairly in regard to personal and professional concerns. Procedures outlined in this policy are intended to provide students with a fair and expeditious resolution of their disputes with University of Florida faculty and/or staff.

7. Student Funding

Websites for the Center of Latin American Studies and for UF Office for Student Financial Affairs should be consulted for current information concerning scholarships, assistantships and fellowships for academic year study at UF; field research grant competitions; summer foreign language fellowships and more funding opportunities.

MALAS applicants and students are encouraged to pursue a range of outside funding sources, which can be explored on UF scholarship search engine, UF International Center, on the website for UF MDP program, as well as other sources.