The UF Center for Latin American Studies is among the oldest and top-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. The 25 students enrolled in the MALAS program in 2016 represent a dozen countries of origin and seven native languages. Building on two interdisciplinary gateway seminars, MALAS students collaborate with 160 affiliate and core faculty members from the humanities, social and natural sciences, and professional schools to develop individual programs of study integrating courses across the university. MALAS graduates are employed in educational and research institutions, international organizations, government agencies, and private businesses in the United States, Latin America, and elsewhere. After obtaining a MALAS degree, many graduates continue their studies in Ph.D. programs and pursue careers in teaching and research.

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 LAS affiliate and center-based faculty to enjoy positive experiences advising MALAS students, while spending less time and energy re-inventing the wheel with each thesis or internship project.
- Promote harmony between students and committee members, among committee members from diverse departments, and with expectations and procedures taught in MALAS research methods course.

Sections:
1. Academic Program
2. Thesis Guidelines
3. Internship Guidelines
4. Final Oral Exam
5. University of Florida Resources and Policies
6. Student Funding

1. Academic Program

1.1 Curriculum for Master’s Degree

Total of 30 credit hours

- Two 3-credit gateway seminars: LAS 6293 Design and Methods of Research in Latin American Studies (offered in fall) and LAS 6220 Issues and Perspectives in Latin American Studies (offered in spring).
- 12 credit hours in an interdisciplinary specialization.
- 3-6 credit hours of thesis research (LAS 6971) or of internship/capstone project (LAS 6949).
- Remaining credits are fulfilled with graduate level courses of interest, which must include 3 credits outside of specialization, and may include language courses.

Language Requirements
Students demonstrate advanced reading, writing and speaking proficiency in Spanish, Portuguese or Haitian Creole, either through coursework or an oral proficiency exam. Language proficiency should be acquired early in the graduate program, and study of a second Latin American language is encouraged.
MALAS Specializations
Each MALAS student chooses one of 12 interdisciplinary specializations, and works with the specialization coordinator to fulfill its requirements.

Specializations:
- Andean Studies
- Arts and Culture of Latin America
- Brazilian Studies
- Caribbean Studies
- Crime, Law, and Governance in the Americas
- Development Studies
- Gender Studies
- International Communication
- Latin American Business Environment
- Latino Studies
- Religion and Society
- Tropical Conservation and Development

It is also possible to design a discipline-based program in consultation with the graduate coordinator. Students have specialized in fields including anthropology, geography, history and political science.

Culminating project:
The MALAS program offers three options for a final project: thesis, internship and capstone project. The first two are described in detail in following sections, and capstone projects may take diverse forms.

1.2 Combined degrees and certificates
A joint BA/MA degree is offered that can be completed in five years.

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

MALAS students may simultaneously 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:
Students are responsible for fulfilling all degree requirements published in the UF Graduate Catalog and additional requirements described in MALAS student handbook. During the semester of graduation, students pursuing the thesis option MUST enroll in LAS 6971, even if they have earned LAS 6971 credits 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) in all work attempted. Students with less than a 3.00 GPA may not hold an assistanship or fellowship. In order to graduate, graduate 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 timeline for students starting program in fall semester (individual paths may vary)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enroll in LAS 6293 Design and Methods of Research</td>
<td>semester 1, August-December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make appointment to talk with initial advisor about topics and courses; seek advice on identifying thesis advisor and committee members</td>
<td>semester 1, first month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore topics, approaches and methods, begin research proposal draft</td>
<td>semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid semester check-in, thesis and internship workshop</td>
<td>semester 1, October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enroll in LAS 6220 Issues and Perspectives in Latin American Studies</td>
<td>semester 2, January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appoint thesis advisor/committee chair by January</td>
<td>semester 2, January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee members selected (minimum: 1 chair + 2 members)</td>
<td>semester 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in Field Research Workshop</td>
<td>February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a research proposal. gain approval and signature from advisor; after approval, file document with Center</td>
<td>semester 2, mid-semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit proposals to competition for field research funding</td>
<td>March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtain IRB approval</td>
<td>semester 2, April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carry out research related to thesis, either in field or library</td>
<td>summer between 2 &amp; 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee meeting to discuss thesis proposal. sign approval form. After approval, file document and form with Center</td>
<td>semester 3, September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students may enroll in LAS 6971 Master’s Research credits with advisor for the purpose of working on aspects of the thesis</td>
<td>semester 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students MUST enroll in LAS 6971 Master’s Research credits</td>
<td>semester of graduation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit complete draft of thesis to advisor. With advisor approval, set defense date with committee.</td>
<td>In time to allow committee review and submission of revised copy to graduate school before deadline for graduation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send thesis to committee at least 10 days before defense</td>
<td>semester 4, before spring break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis defense with committee in time to submit revised copy to graduate school before deadline for spring graduation. <a href="https://gradschool.ufl.edu/editorial/introduction.html">https://gradschool.ufl.edu/editorial/introduction.html</a></td>
<td>For spring graduation, first submission deadline is usually just after spring break</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 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 **draft research proposals** in a required course on *Research Design and Methods* (LAS 6293). During semester 2, students work with their advisors to develop proposals, and gain advisors’ signatures on thesis research proposals. In many cases this proposal is adapted for field research grant competitions and for IRB approval.

Although form and length vary, most research proposals are 1000–2000 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 scholarly 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, ethnecology tools, literary analysis, focus groups, ethnographic observation, mapping)
- definition of key concepts
- theories or approaches to be applied in analyzing findings, answering research questions
- areas of literature to be studied
- demarcate the topic of study: historical period, geographic location, population, aspects
- spatiotemporal frame of research activities (where and when research is carried out)
2.3 Thesis proposal

The thesis proposal updates all content listed above for a research proposal, with the addition of a thesis outline and writing deadlines. A thesis proposal should identify issues and questions to be addressed in each chapter, report methods used to date, describe materials and findings obtained, comment on secondary literature consulted, and specify the contribution the thesis is intended to make. Most proposals are 1250 to 2500 words long.

After gaining approval of committee chair, each student should present a thesis proposal to all committee members and arrange a meeting to discuss the proposal. 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 thesis guidelines, and for bringing copies of the Thesis Proposal Approval Form to the meeting.

This meeting, which usually takes place during the first month of semester 3, provides a forum for student and committee members to reflect together on fieldwork results and strategies for developing the written thesis, and to establish consensus on plans for ongoing research and writing. Usually the student and committee members look together at an 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, student submits a signed copy for department files.

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 way)*

**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, methodological instruments developed and applied
  • Key concepts developed and applied in the thesis
  • Approach or theory that guides work

Body (*elements may be organized in numerous ways*)
  
  • Presentation of research findings
  • Reflection on literature pertinent to the topic, approach and context
  • 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 range between 60 and 100 pages, double-spaced (15,000 to 25,000 words), not including bibliography and appendices; however there is no established minimum or maximum length. Each thesis should carefully follow a major writing and citation style. 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. UF has its own set of technical regulations for Masters and Doctoral theses (procedures, formatting, style guides); 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. Find specific requirements at the UF Graduate School.

2.5 General expectations and criteria for assessing thesis (will vary by thesis, topic, committee members)

Composition of paper

- Research questions and purpose of study are stated in the beginning of the thesis and addressed at the end.
- The 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 relevance of research questions and contribution to stated purpose.

Methodology

- Research is carried out with sound and well-designed methods.
- Methods used, and the process of applying those methods, are explicitly described.
- A variety of methods are applied; if relevant to the approach, both qualitative and quantitative.
- If appropriate, specific research instruments are included in appendices.
- The author discusses the pros and cons of selected methods and instruments.

Theoretical perspective

- Applies explicitly identified concepts or theories to develop original analysis or interpretation.
- Approaches or ideas developed in different academic disciplines are applied and combined to address issues relevant to interdisciplinary Latin American Studies.
- Theses may draw on material, approaches 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.
- Identifies and discusses publications on the topic of study, on the selected theoretical and methodological approach(es), and on the geographic region(s).
- Thesis brings together literature from multiple academic disciplines, including relevant foreign language publications and other sources outside of US-based academic literature (e.g. from UF Latin American and Caribbean Collection).

Research results

- The thesis presents original results generated with appropriate methods.
- Sufficient, reliable material gathered via field research and/or from documents, data-bases, websites, or other sources.
- The thesis complements and contextualizes primary material with secondary data (e.g., demographic or geograpical 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.
- Concepts, theories, approaches critically discussed w attention to socio-historical context and origins of these ideas.

Style and presentation

- Clearly distinguishes 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.

3. Internship Option Guidelines

Internships related to Latin America, the Caribbean, or Latinx in the US offer unique opportunities for applied and practical learning. Experience working with an array of organizations can inform and deepen classroom study, and vice versa, and open up career possibilities related to Latin American Studies.

Before embarking on a project, a student must obtain permission from the graduate advisor to participate in the internship option, and also obtain approval of the organization, institution or group with which the student will collaborate (hereafter referred to as the “host agency”). Internships must relate to Latin American, Caribbean, or Latinx Studies; the bulk of the work should be substantive and non-clerical; and work may be paid or unpaid. Written agreements documented in the signed Internship Plan and Internship Agreement assure that students, host agencies, faculty supervisor and graduate advisor agree on explicit expectations and procedures. 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 timeline for students starting program in fall semester *(individual paths may vary)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enroll in LAS 6293 Design and Methods of Research</td>
<td>semester 1, August-December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore topics, approaches and methods for internship</td>
<td>semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid semester check-in, thesis and internship workshop</td>
<td>semester 1, October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enroll in LAS 6220</td>
<td>semester 2, January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues and Perspectives in Latin American Studies</td>
<td>semester 2, mid-term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisory Faculty Member appointed by January</td>
<td>semester 2, mid-term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee selected (minimum: 1 supervisor + 1 member)</td>
<td>semester 2, mid-term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in Field Research Workshop, if relevant</td>
<td>February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If relevant, submit proposals for funding</td>
<td>March-April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop an Internship Plan and Internship Agreement. Gain approval and signature from the host agency, supervising faculty, and graduate advisor; file documents with Center</td>
<td>semester 2, mid-month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Register for 3-6 credits of LAS 6949 during the semester in which the internship is carried out; or during fall semester after summer internship</td>
<td>semester 2 or 3, or summer between</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carry out internship (timing will vary)</td>
<td>semester 2 or 3, or summer between</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee meeting to discuss proposal for internship paper; sign approval form; after approval, file document and form with Center</td>
<td>semester 3, before mid-term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option to enroll in LAS 6905 “Individual Work” for students needing extra time to finish internship paper</td>
<td>semester 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain supervisor’s approval of draft, then schedule defense</td>
<td>semester 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send paper to committee at least 10 days before defense</td>
<td>semester 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internship paper defense with committee in time to submit revised copy before deadline for spring graduation</td>
<td>For spring graduation, defense is completed by March, and paperwork in GIMS system before final submission date in April.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="https://gradschool.ufl.edu/editorial/introduction.html">https://gradschool.ufl.edu/editorial/introduction.html</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2 Responsibilities of the student

Find an internship

Students may explore internship options on their own, or pursue connections maintained by the Center for Latin American Studies through a variety of 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 graduate coordinator and faculty supervisor may assist in the process, and must approve of 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. Check out possibilities for paid internship with UF Latin American and Caribbean Library Collections via the Smathers Graduate Student Internship Program.

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 with 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 Graduate Coordinator.

Earn credits

Each student is required to sign up for 3-6 credits of LAS 6949 during the semester in which the internship is carried out; if internship is carried out in the summer, the student may enroll in LAS 6949 during a summer term or in the following fall semester. A UF faculty member is registered as instructor of record, and will grade the internship on an 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 Plan for Internship, 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.
- After finishing the internship, submit a 10-20 page final report to the UF instructor of record.

Develop an internship paper proposal

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. The following outline may be adapted to each unique internship project.

Introduction

- Character and focus of internship.
- When, where, with whom it was carried out.
- Brief summary: Why is the experience important, and what was learned?
- 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
  - Geographical characteristics of location
  - Historical considerations
  - Cultural and political conditions and traditions
  - Socio-economic characteristics and issues
  - Demographic profile
  - Socioeconomic data
  - 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 the 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.
- 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 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 (keep it brief)

- 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 research 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 proposal to committee

After gaining approval of supervisor, each student should give a draft of the internship proposal to all members of the committee, and arrange a meeting to discuss the proposal. 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 internship proposal meeting, usually held early in semester 3, provides a forum for student and committee member to reflect together on plans for writing the internship paper. After committee members meet, make suggestions, and approve the proposal, a signed copy is stored in the student’s file.

Write a final paper

Design and styles may vary, yet each paper should cover the points identified above under internship paper proposal. Final papers may range from 25-50 pages long, double spaced. This paper should carefully follow writing standards described in Chicago Manual of Style (CMS). Pay special attention to CMS Author-Date 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 schedules a public presentation and defense, and sends the internship paper to all committee members ten days in advance. As detailed in section 4, each internship student makes a public presentation followed by a defense of the paper with the student’s supervisory committee. This presentation and discussion constitutes 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 some or all journal entries and of 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.
- Preside over two formal meetings with student and committee: one to discuss the proposal 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 with LAS graduate status. Additional members may come from within and beyond UF. Committee members support the development and implementation of internship plan, meet to discuss the proposal for the internship paper, read and comment on the final paper, and 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. Once an agency accepts an intern, it is expected to provide a variety of 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 duties agreed upon. 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.

4. Final Oral Exam

All MALAS students complete a final oral exam. For most, this will be the defense of a thesis or an internship paper. The final oral exam of a capstone project may be similar to these defenses, or take other forms.

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, practicing their opening presentation, and making sure it fits within 10-15 minutes. The defense is a public event: colleagues and professors may be invited to attend, others may show up. Refreshments may be served, 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. The student and audience members will be asked to leave the room during this discussion.

Opening presentation

Most candidates begin the defense with a brief presentation (10-15 minutes) that provides context and sets the tone for the defense.

- 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 pertinent 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 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 is 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 15-30 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.
3) The committee and the chair or supervisor sign the forms and trust the candidate to make the changes.

Documents must be submitted to the Center’s Program Assistant before the Final Submission Deadline for intended term of degree award. Students submitting a document for review after this deadline will graduate in a subsequent term. Do not assume your document will automatically be accepted: once the Editorial Office’s requirements are met, you will receive an e-mail indicating that you have achieved final clearance. Documents may be submitted as soon as student and committee are satisfied they are ready for publication. 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” or “I will need to think about that,” then avoid rambling on. As the discussion progresses, a candidate may take an active role by posing questions to the committee, taking advantage of the opportunity for collective feedback.

5. University of Florida Resources and Policies

Campus helping resources

- **Latin American and Caribbean Collection at UF Libraries**: Specialized staff support use and enjoyment of the 500,000 volumes, 50,000 microforms, thousands of current and historical serial titles and digital resources in [this world-class collection](#). LACC library staff provide expert help in online searches for research and study materials.

- **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 with E-learning in CANVAS**: Contact the [UF Help Desk](mailto:Learning-support@ufl.edu) at (352) 392-HELP, then select option 2.

- **Personal Challenges**: Students experiencing crises 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 to deal with academic challenges.
  - University Counseling Center, 301 Peabody Hall, 392-1575; personal and career counseling.
  - Student Mental Health, Student Health Care Center, 392-1171, personal counseling.
  - Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS), Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.
  - Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601, career development assistance and counseling.

**University of Florida Policies**

- **Students with Disabilities Act**: The Dean of Students Office coordinates 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](tel: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.

- **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 collaborative, 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.

6. **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.